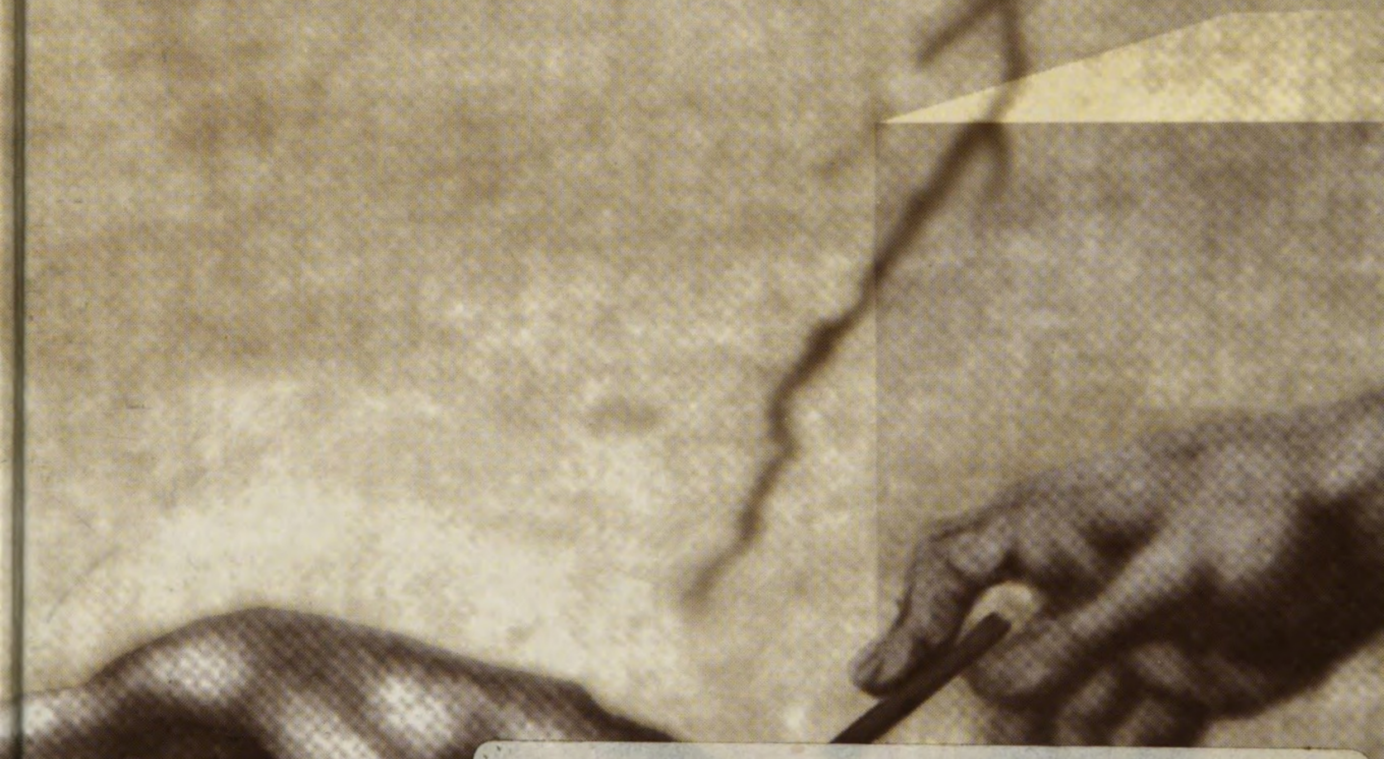
INDIAN POLITICS AND THE 1998 ELECTION

Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics



AM 0275835 Code I-E-9937985
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EDITORS
Ramashray Roy

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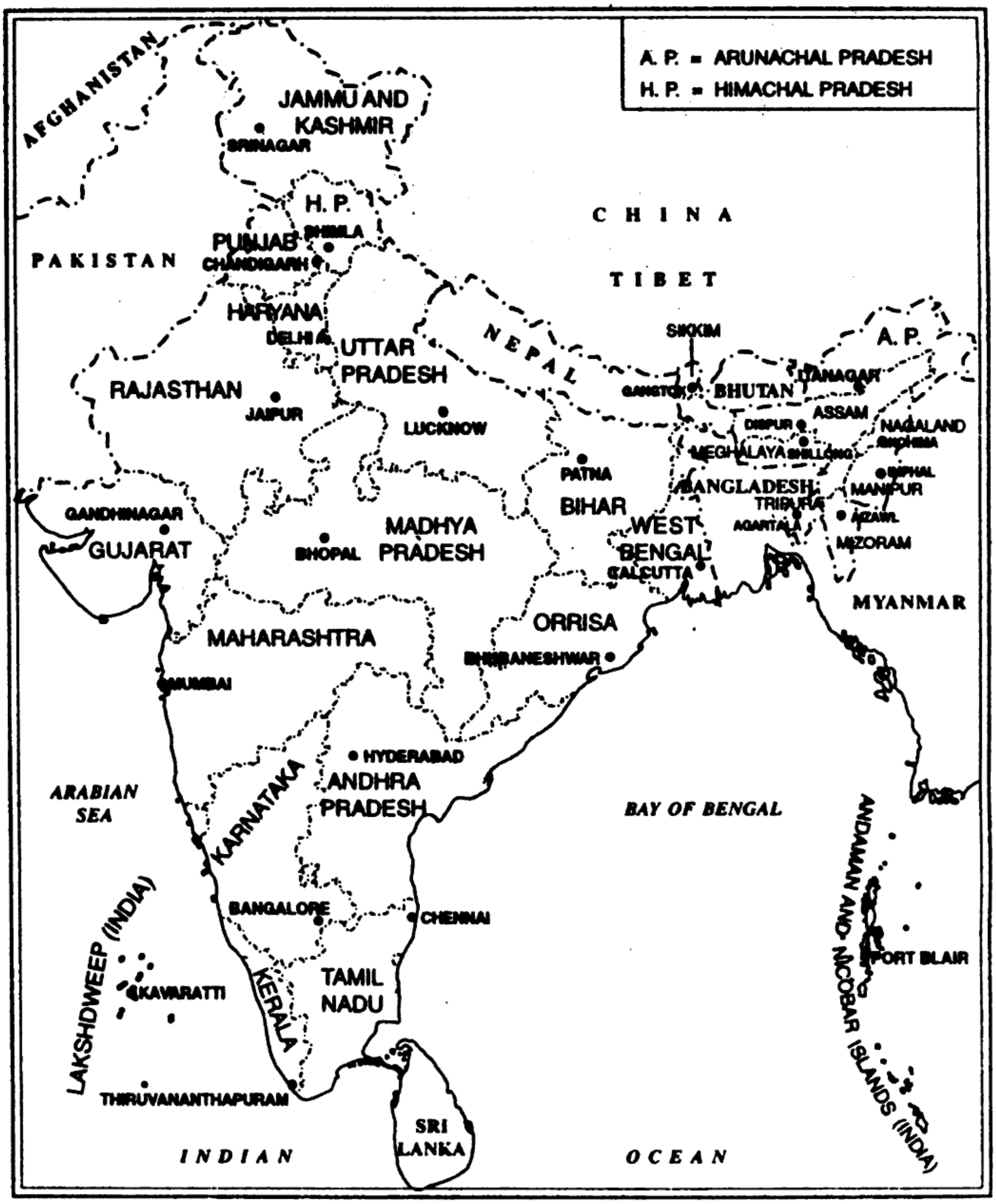
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Indian Politics and the 1998 Election

Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics

Edited by

Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace

Sage Publications
New Delhi • Thousand Oaks • London

JQ
292
.I 5531
1999

To the Roy-Wallace 'Joint Family'

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First published in 1999 by

Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd
M–32 Market, Greater Kailash – I
New Delhi 110048

Sage Publications Inc
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California, 91320

Sage Publications Ltd
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU

Published by Tejeshwar Singh for Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, typeset by Line Arts, Pondicherry and printed at Chaman Enterprises, Delhi.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Indian politics and the 1998 election: regionalism, Hindutva and state politics/ edited by Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace.
p. cm. (cloth)
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
1. Elections—India. 2. Elections—India—States. I. Roy, Ramashray. II. Wallace, Paul, 1931– .
JQ292.I553 324.954052—dc21 1999 99–37985

ISBN: 0–7619–9388–6 (US-Hb) 81–7036–859–6 (India-Hb)

Sage Production Team: Sumitra Srinivasan, Parul Nayyar and Santosh Rawat

Grad
LC-Delhi
7-10-00

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Preface: Back to the Future!

As this book is about to go to press, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition government has collapsed and the 12th Lok Sabha has been dissolved. Three powerful women leaders played major roles in the no confidence vote on April 17, 1999, which succeeded by only one vote—270–269. J. Jayalalitha withdrew her 18 All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) members of parliament (MPs) from the ruling coalition after a much discussed tea session with Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Mayawati announced, the night previous to the vote, that her five Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MPs would abstain. Instead, they voted against the government. Two unanticipated additional votes also formed part of the drama. A National Conference MP from Kashmir defected from the ruling alliance, and a controversial vote by the Congress chief minister of Orissa was upheld by the speaker. The 12th Lok Sabha, consequently, is the shortest on record—five months less than its predecessor. Thirteen days of rule for the BJP in 1996 was followed by Third Front coalition governments until 1998. Elections in March 1998 for a new Lok Sabha resulted in 13 months of rule for the BJP-led coalition. Now, once again, the election dice will have to roll. No political party or MP appears to favor snap elections this early. Heatwave conditions in northern India have also not improved dispositions.

Following the vote of no confidence, various efforts to form an alternative government failed. Serious attempts to patch together another coalition involved all major groups. Some effort was made to reconstitute the BJP-led coalition, but President K.R. Narayanan concluded that it had lost its cohesion. A serious move for a Third Front government had to face the reality of its virtual demise in the March 1998 election and the preference of most of its remaining elements for a Congress-led government. Sonia Gandhi came closest to extending the 12th

Lok Sabha as she led an attempt by the Congress Party to form a minority government. Mulayam Singh Yadav proved to be the major stumbling block to this, as he withheld the support of his 20 Samajwadi Party (SP) MPs from Uttar Pradesh. Instead, he argued for a Third Front government to be headed by octogenarian Jyoti Basu, Communist Party of India (Marxist) chief minister of West Bengal. It is very possible that Mulayam Singh did not want a Congress national government to have the opportunity to make inroads into his Muslim and backward caste support base in Uttar Pradesh.

These unsuccessful coalition-making efforts mirror the three major political groups that have dominated Indian politics since V.P. Singh led his newly formed Janata Dal to power in 1989. The Janata Dal became part of a Third Force, which subsequently lost seats as well as splintered into various smaller regional parties. These smaller parties join traditional regional parties based on language (such as the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu), religion (such as the Sikh-based Akali Dal in Punjab), and tribal affinities (as in the northeast). Newer regional parties now exist in most Indian states. They can dominate or be the major opposition party at the state level, but nationally operate within the context of India's two major parties—the BJP and the Congress.

Thus the contemporary paradox. Regional parties cannot rule by themselves or at this point join together successfully as a governing Third Force. Nor are they successful at providing leadership in coalition formation. They are especially powerful, nonetheless, at bringing down a coalition government as their support is essential to forming a majority. In this respect, the dynamics of India's multi-party system resembles that of contemporary Israel, with two dominant parties relating to different parts of the political spectrum and ideologies amidst a sea of small parties. The BJP's Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, becomes pitted against a Congress Party attempting to represent secular politics. The Congress is now somewhat revitalized after a steady electoral decline until the 1998 national election. Subsequent state election victories in Rajasthan, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh provided the optimism that led the Congress to exert its power in toppling the BJP-led government. But efforts to put together its own coalition majority ran aground on the rocks of regional parties. Moreover, political power and political realities have now been shared by all major and most minor contestants. As a consequence, ideological rigidities have been markedly tempered by pragmatism. Indian politics in this era of coalition

maneuverings has become highly complex. Certainly, instability can be charged with the many changes and too frequent elections. There are also the continuing patterns at the state and national levels. Decentralization, constitutional governance, and the positive effects of continuing political participation constitute a marked contrast with the deeper structural problems of Indonesia, and large-scale political violence in the Balkans, and eastern and central Africa.

The chapters in this book highlight, provide basic data, and analyze the key components of Indian politics. They help to explain India's electoral politics in the latter part of the 20th century and prepare the reader for the next election which will take the world's largest democracy into the 21st century.

April 1999 Paul Wallace

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Introduction: India's 1998 Election—Hindutva, the Tail Wags the Elephant, and Pokhran

Paul Wallace

At least three major strands emerged from India's 1998 parliamentary election. First, there was Hindutva—the Hindu nationalist philosophy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which improved the BJP's 1996 total of 161 seats to 182 in the 545 seat Lok Sabha and formed the core of the new governing coalition. Second, regional parties were the tail which provided a majority to the coalition government. Nationally, they are small in number ranging from the AIADMK's 18 seats to a number of parties with one seat each. At the state level, however, they loom much larger. In many cases, they are the dominant majority with the BJP as the smaller coalition partner. Third, stemming from the BJP election victory was its almost immediate decision to engage in nuclear tests. Pokhran is the test site in Rajasthan where on May 11 and 13, 1998, India decided to translate its nuclear capacity into weaponization.

Hindutva

Hindutva symbolizes the triumph of the BJP which—as one of its slogans has implored for the past three years—at last is 'given a chance'

to rule at the national level. Two years previously, following the 1996 election, the BJP had also emerged as the single largest political party in the Lok Sabha. Atal Behari Vajpayee claimed and received the first opportunity to form a government. It lasted for 13 days before the BJP decided, following a debate on a vote of confidence but not an actual vote, that it couldn't convince or tempt a sufficient number of other political parties and individual MPs to join a coalition. Lacking a majority, Prime Minister Vajpayee and his BJP ministry resigned.

Two years of United Front governments followed in which a coterie of parties pasted together minority governments supported from the outside by India's second largest national party—the Congress Party. Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda of Karnataka became the first low caste prime minister, followed subsequently by Inder Kumar Gujral from Punjab. Both were from the centrist Janata Dal, which had won only 44 seats. During this two year period, the BJP altered its political strategy so that it could also engage in what it now described as political reality. Coalition building so as to achieve power became the first priority, while Hindutva seemed to be relegated to a secondary or minor position.

The chapters in this volume examine the strategy and tactics of the BJP and its major opponents. There certainly are differences between states and even regions. Nonetheless, a clear pattern of political accommodation by the BJP to disparate groups, issues, and personalities emerges during the election period and subsequently in solidifying and maintaining its governing coalition.

What will be the consequences for Hindutva? Is the assumption of power behind what most analysts describe as a moderate leader, Prime Minister Vajpayee, a domestication or moderating of more extreme BJP positions? Is this equivalent to the moderation of extremist Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (DMK) positions in the 1950s? Electoral politics brought the DMK to power in Tamil Nadu resulting in its abrogation of separatist demands and political integration into India's polity.

Prime Minister Vajpayee, on the other hand, is also described by his extreme critics as 'the mask' which hides the extremist views and actions of the Hindutva *parivar* or family of support organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad.[1] To what extent the BJP will be guided or driven by their more extremist support groups remains to be seen. A somewhat mixed situation is indicated by the election strategies and tactics in various states. As usual, India's social and political mosaic makes it difficult

to offer pat generalizations. Depth analysis at the state level is essential and that is provided by the contributors to this volume.

Regionalism: The Tail that Wags the Elephant?

The necessity of a national coalition government embracing over a dozen political parties emphasizes the critical importance of regional political parties. To what extent are these regional parties simply appendages of the dominant BJP, and to what degree do they in fact limit and even redirect government policies and their implementation? The consequences of this regional tail wagging the BJP elephant remain to be seen. The first task is to gain an understanding of the new structure of India's political party system as it now operates at the national and state levels.

India's 1998 parliamentary election confirmed a new era in its political party structure. Technically, the national party system can now be described as a bi-modal, multi-party system. In practical language, India now has two major or national political parties maneuvering within a large vortex of small regional parties. Neither of the major parties—the BJP and the Congress—emerged from the March–April 1998 election with close to a majority in the Lok Sabha. Nor is a majority of seats a realistic goal for the foreseeable future, barring some unforeseen dramatic event which propels one of India's famous electoral waves as during the Indira Gandhi period. That seems unlikely.

Bi-modal now is an accurate term as both the BJP and the Congress Party are capable of forging a majority coalition or bringing down the government given favorable circumstances. That wasn't true in 1996. The motive of keeping the BJP out served as a rallying point for opposition parties which refused to consider allying with what they thought to be a 'communal' party. That changed in 1998.

Alliance partners, in addition to the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, included J. Jayalalitha's AIADMK from Tamil Nadu, the somewhat socialist-oriented Samata Party from Bihar, the Biju Janata Dal from Orissa, the Sikh-based Akali Dal from Punjab, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress from West Bengal, and the Haryana Vikas Party in Haryana. After the election, new alliance partners included Farooq Abdullah's National Conference from Kashmir which subsequently provided support to the BJP alliance, leaving the National Front, adding a Muslim-based political party to what is often described as a Hindu nationalist alliance; the Telugu Desam Party from Andhra (a key element of the United Front government) and the Haryana Lok Dal(R) which resulted in two bitter rival state parties joining the BJP coalition.

This is a wide-ranging group of political parties, each of which has its own agenda focusing on a specific territory and specific issues usually limited to one state, one language area and/or one religious community. Except for the Shiv Sena, they are not supportive of Hindutva or most other major BJP priorities. The coalition's National Agenda for Governance issued in March 1998 could easily have been a Congress Party or United Front manifesto. Consequently, the BJP is now engaged in a level of compromise with other parties and groups it formerly opposed and strongly rejected. To this extent, the 1998 election provide evidence of change and accommodation. Such a strategy is at least partly responsible for its continued electoral growth.

Conceivably, the Congress Party could have been the major loser in a zero sum game between the two major antagonists. Such is not the case in the 1998 election. Its steady decline from its era of national dominance seemingly has been arrested in 1998. Sonia Gandhi generally is given the credit for maintaining and even increasing the Congress Lok Sabha total from 137 to 141 seats. Studies from individual states, however, indicate that while she attracted large and even huge crowds everywhere, electoral impact is less and differs from state to state.

National elections confirmed the continuance of two major national parties, but even here with some regional overtones. The BJP's major strength remains in the Hindi north, particularly in Uttar Pradesh (57 seats), Madhya Pradesh (30), Bihar (20), and Delhi (6). It solidified its majority in the western state of Gujarat (19), overcoming serious factionalism. Inroads were made into the south via electoral alliances and steady organizational development in Karnataka (13), Orissa (7), Andhra (4), and Tamil Nadu (3), which suggest the continued nationalization of the BJP. A beginning has been made in CPM-dominated West Bengal through an alliance with Mamata Banerjee's splinter Trinamul Congress.

By contrast, the Congress is almost shut out from it former strongholds in the north, with no seats in its former core state of Uttar Pradesh, none from Punjab, only five from Bihar, and one from Delhi. Rajasthan is the somewhat surprise exception in the north where the Congress won 18 seats, an increase of six compared to 1996. Even more significantly, Maharashtra in the west registered the most important Congress gain as it increased its 1996 total from 18 to 33. Congress did very well in Andhra Pradesh, with 22 seats, and also made a partial comeback in Karnataka with nine as compared to four seats in 1996. Ten seats in Assam was the Congress highlight in the northeast.

Despite the somewhat regional strengths and weaknesses of the BJP and the Congress, their strategies and realities increasingly find them competing head to head in almost every state. In context, alliance partners among 'regional parties' have become a critical factor.

Regional parties raise an enormous complication of definition. There is some confusion between 'regional' and 'single state' party. The two are generally used interchangeably in India. The Election Commission's three political party categories consist of state party, national party, and 'registered (unrecognized) party'.[2] To be recognized by the Election Commission, a state party must have been functioning for five continuous years, and win a specific percentage of seats or 4 percent of the total valid votes in elections to either the Lok Sabha or state assembly. A national party is defined as one 'which is recognized as a State Party in four or more States' or union territories.[3]

It would be useful to add a category between single-state and national party which would be truly regional in that it would describe parties which compete effectively in more than one state, but not in a large number. In such a case, only the BJP and Congress Party would emerge as national parties following the 1998 election. All the other parties, now designated as 'national', would be regional. These would include the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) which dominates West Bengal (winning 24 seats in 1998, but competes effectively only in that state), Kerala (6), and Tripura (2). The CPI's eight seats were spread between five states which testifies to its lack of effective political power in any.

Almost all other political parties are now single-state parties which are in first or second position in one state only. The splintering of the Janata Dal (JD), reduced from 44 to just six parliamentary seats in 1998, has added to the list of single-state parties. Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal (17 seats) in Bihar is the single biggest splinter from the JD in the north, while in the east the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa won nine seats. Longer established major single-state parties which did well in the 1998 election include Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (which won 20 seats) in Uttar Pradesh and Jayalalitha's AIADMK (18) in Tamil Nadu.

These parliamentary results reflect to a significant degree the political significance of single-state parties as they ally with one of the two national political parties, and thus raises the question of which party dominates or the complementary nature of the alliance.

Punjab is a clear example of a single-state party being the dominant partner at the state level in a winning coalition with a national political party. The Sikh- and rural-centered Akali Dal (Badal)[4] entered into a formal alliance for the 1998 election with the BJP following its 'informal' alliance in 1996.[5] That enabled a sweep for the alliance with the Akalis winning eight and the BJP three of the 12 seats. The 12th seat could also be counted in their list as they supported outgoing Prime Minister I. K. Gujral, who ran on a Janata Dal ticket, for 'pardoning' Punjab's huge debt to the center. The sweep also reflects the respective strengths of the Akalis and the BJP in Punjab.

Pramod Kumar in his chapter on Punjab documents the historical development of electoral alliances in the state culminating with the contemporary Akali–BJP hegemonic coalition. He also provides impressive data on their respective spheres of electoral support, both in terms of the rural and urban sectors as well as within the three major regions of Punjab.

Badal's Akali Dal won 75 of the 117 state assembly seats in 1997, while its urban-based BJP partner won 18. Congress, the major opponent, won only 14 seats.[6] In the 1998 parliamentary election, the Congress lost all three of its seats. Thus, the Congress Party continued its decline, going from 12 parliamentary seats in 1992, to three in 1996, to none in 1998.

The rural Akali–urban BJP Punjab sweep in 1998 emphasizes the complementary nature of the alliance when the social bases of the partners are distinct from each other. Congress leader R.L. Bhatia seemed to have a lock on the Amritsar parliamentary seat, winning regularly from this largely urban constituency. In 1996, he won partly as a consequence of BJP urban votes going to Bhatia when the BJP candidate seemed to be trailing the Janata Dal candidate backed by the Akali Dal. The Akali–BJP alliance, in contrast with 1996, included Amritsar. A relatively unknown BJP candidate, a Sikh, backed by the Akalis, won by 90,000 + votes.

Interviews with a wide range of leading and support politicians in Amritsar, including the Congress Party, revealed a surprising degree of consensus on the effectiveness of the Akali–BJP alliance. R.L. Bhatia, the incumbent Congress MP, said that he always received a majority of Hindu votes in his previous elections. 'The alliance (Akalis–BJP) gave BJP the benefit.'[7] Most interviewees, including strong Congress supporters, were of the opinion that as long as the alliance lasted, the Akali Dal would win elections in Punjab.[8]

That raises the question of advantage. Is it mutual or does the BJP replace the regional party over time? In Punjab, there isn't any apprehension among Akali Dal (Badal) leaders or supporters. They are confident that the BJP can't and won't compete with them in rural areas. Similarly, the BJP has the same conclusion in regard to competition with the Akalis in urban areas. Both the Akalis and the BJP see the Congress as their leading competitor. Formerly, the Congress used to take electoral advantage of Akali–BJP (earlier Jana Sangh) animosities. Now, the Congress is squeezed.

Factional politics have significantly divided the Congress since Chief Minister Beant Singh's assassination in 1995. Akali factional politics in turn may provide opportunities to the Congress Party or the BJP in future. Pramod Kumar in the Punjab chapter uses the term 'bridge politics' to categorize the dynamics of Akali factionalism. Chief Minister Badal occupies 'the political space ... in the domain of politics of development' and 'Punjabi identity'. By contrast, SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra's political strength is 'mainly from religious issues'. Moderate versus extremist positions extend from this historical tendency in Akali factionalism.

In 1998, the Akali–BJP relationship strengthened both parties. Badal's Akali Dal secured its number one priority by coming to power in the state assembly in 1997 and reaffirming its dominance in the 1998 parliamentary elections. It also gained a window into national politics. The BJP gained all but one of the parliamentary delegation of 12 (eight Akali and three BJP) for its coalition government and an enhanced position in Punjab state politics.

Haryana appears to be in a similar situation. Bansi Lal and his regional Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) came to power at the state level in 1996 with an alliance with the BJP. The BJP received the larger share of parliamentary tickets and won four out of the 10 seats, with three for the HVP, and two for the Congress Party. In 1998, however, election politics took their normal swing in Haryana with two of the 'three Lals' (Bansi Lal, Bhajan Lal for the Congress, and Devi Lal and his son Chautala for the Haryana Lok Dal) gaining at the expense of the ruling Lal. In this case, Bansi Lal became the loser going from three seats to one seat. His alliance partner, the BJP, also lost, going from four seats to one seat. The Congress increased from two to three seats. The HLD, led by Devi Lal and Chautala, was the big winner with four seats in 1998 compared to none in 1996.

Aya Ram, gaya Ram, however, is the dominant pattern in Haryana with winners leading changes in party affiliation. The BJP forming the government in New Delhi led to a shift in the HLD to support the BJP at the center. Thus, there is the somewhat bizarre situation of two of the leading parties in Haryana—Bansi Lal's HVP and Devi Lal/Chautala's HLD—bitterly opposed to each other at the state level, but both supporting the BJP at the national level. Interviews in Haryana which probed the advantage at the state level to the BJP failed to provide any evidence that the BJP will reduce or replace existing parties or make additional inroads.[9]

The situation in Haryana seems to resemble Punjab more than Karnataka. Hindutva is not an issue in either state, at least partly because Muslims are not an electorally significant part of the population. More important is the lack of rural support for the BJP and its competition with the Congress Party for urban support. Akalis are predominantly rural in Punjab, which is also the case for the Devi Lal/Chautala Jat-based HLD in Haryana. Bansi Lal's HVP also relies more on rural than urban support, but is more balanced.

Haryana, however, appears to provide more of an opening for the BJP as the Bansi Lal HVP and the Devi Lal/Chautala HLD are personality rather than institutionally-based parties in contrast to the Akali Dal (Badal) in Punjab. Jat- and rural-based parties haye dominated Haryana since Sir Chhotu Ram and the Unionist Party in the pre-independence period. However, economic and social changes in the form of the green revolution in agriculture, migrant labor, transportation, industrialization, and urbanization are evident in both states. Electoral behavior will reflect these changes in the future.

Pokhran

India's new government received overwhelming public approval for its nuclear tests and announced weaponization in May 1998.[10] There isn't any doubt that a handful of BJP leaders took the decision almost immediately after assuming power. A Cabinet decision did not take place. Nor did the decision await the establishment and consideration by a proposed national security council. Prime Minister Vajpayee and the BJP accordingly and properly received credit for their decisiveness. All political parties applauded the scientific achievement and its scientific establishment. The motivation for the decision and its wisdom, however, have become a source of political debate.

To what extent strategic interests and national security drove the decision and not domestic electoral politics is a debatable matter. Pramod Kantha's chapter focuses on this subject, and a few of the other contributors have provided their own perspectives related to their states. No attempt at a consensus has been made. It is much too early. Some of the elements of the debate, nonetheless, seem to be clear. They rest on the strategic necessity, the economic consequences such as sanctions, and the possibility of India's enhanced international role.

Prime Minister Vajpayee in his initial explanation for the nuclear tests and need for weaponization emphasized the strategic threat from China. To what extent that existed at the time of the tests is disputed in the Kantha chapter and by the Congress Party. Kantha places more emphasis on domestic political considerations.

R.L. Bhatia[11], union minister of state for foreign affairs in the Narasimha Rao Congress government provided an early intimation that the Congress Party would be highly critical of the tests as they relate to international relations. He maintained that there hadn't been one incident between India and China from 1988 to 1998. He emphasized his role in concluding a treaty with China, signed in 1993, whereby both countries agreed to a reduction of military forces along the border and China became more neutral toward Pakistan. In February 1998, Bhatia stated, China agreed to reduce its military by 500,000. Soon after the May 11 and 13 nuclear tests, Bhatia gave a lengthy interview to the *Indian Express* on May 19[12] in which he criticized the effect of the nuclear explosions in terms of harming Indo-Chinese relations rather than 'building friendship with China'.

Five months after Pokhran II, relations between India and China worsened. Gautam Kaul of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police is reported as having stated that China had 'reinforced its frontier troops three times in the last five months'.[13] The longer-term result on Indo-Chinese relations of the explosions remain to be seen.

Relations with Pakistan, particularly in regard to Kashmir, were also emphasized as necessitating the explosions, especially by Home Minister Lal Krishan Advani. Subsequently, a series of meetings have been held by the respective Prime Ministers, Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, and by other high-ranking officials in Sri Lanka, South Africa, and at the United Nations in New York. Meeting sites and future dates have since shifted to Pakistan and India. In addition to Kashmir, a variety of other mutual considerations such as trade and communications are involved.

A veteran Akali Dal (Badal) MLA from a rural constituency in Punjab brought out another dimension of the nuclear blasts as they pertain to Indo-Pakistan relations. Cultural exchanges between the two Punjabs, he suggested, could be 'hurt'. A *kabbadi* team came from Pakistan and played five matches, he pointed out, with a warm reception on both sides. 'Kabbadi diplomacy' he termed it. Among other attributes shared is caste. Two members of the Pakistan team were Dhillons, one a Gill, and one a Randhawa. These are also common Sikh castes. Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal, for example, is a Dhillon. Similarly, a Pakistani Punjabi writer who spent 30 days on the Indian side is a Ghumman, a Jat sub-caste used by Punjabis on both sides. Illyas Ghumman received such a warm reception, 'he started weeping' in many meetings with cultural and writer organizations.[14]

Economic consequences of Pokhran will be interpreted in terms of political advantage. India is not as affected by sanctions as Pakistan's more vulnerable economy. Moreover, Non-Resident Indians (NRI) responded to a special government offering by purchasing approximately $4.1 billion of high interest bonds. Patriotism is seen as an important motive. On the other hand, the high price of onions, rising as high as Rs. 60 per kilo, is seen by the opposition as a symbol of economic difficulties and government mismanagement.

Economic and political factors are intertwined, as are domestic and foreign relations. Pokhran symbolizes India's high levels of achievement and still greater potential. It also symbolizes domestic and foreign difficulties which provide barriers to enhanced development in India. In summary, the results of the 1998 election provide an initial test at governance for the BJP. The manner in which it came to power via various strategies and tactics in individual states, and its alliance system are described and analyzed in the following chapters.

Changing Party System and Bases of Support: State Studies

Elections in the 1990s, in turn building on the preceding decades, reflect and contribute to a changing political party system. Pradeep Chhibber and Irfan Nooruddin build their electoral analysis around the emergence of two party competition— 'a key feature of party politics in India in the 1990s'. Increasing competition throughout India has resulted in the BJP becoming, in 1998, the single largest national party,

both in terms of votes and seats. It has also led to fragmentation of the party system, especially in the Hindi speaking belt, which is close to a three party system. Elsewhere in India, the average is closer to two-and-a-half parties (see Table 2.6 in the Chhibber–Nooruddin chapter). Strong regional parties, the authors find, result in a lesser level of party fragmentation at the subnational level, especially the district.

Chhibber and Nooruddin use quantitative measures and statistical analysis extending from 1957 to 1998 to anchor their findings. Somewhat surprisingly, their data does not support increased mobilization as an explanation for the twin phenomena of increased party competition and fragmentation. *An increased voter share to the second party is the major factor.* More precisely, increased two party competition means greater mobilization rather than the reverse.

Fragmentation, on the other hand, reduces the level of participation. A larger number of competitive parties—more than two—increases the number of 'core voters' and reduces the number of 'swing voters', thereby resulting in a lower turnout. Where one party is dominant, it has less incentive to target swing voters, with a lower voter turnout as a result.

The three major groupings in the Hindi belt comparing 1957–1967 to 1998 are:

1. The BJP, which has increased its vote percentage from less than 10 to 20+ percent.
2. The Congress Party, whose votes have been almost halved from 19.4 percent to 10.36 percent.
3. Regional parties, whose vote share has increased from zero to 6.84 percent.

As Table 2.9 in the Chhibber–Nooruddin chapter reveals, other national and left parties have become almost statistically insignificant in the Hindi belt.

The Congress is a big loser, especially in states with strong regional parties. The Congress's votes in the 1990s moved to the BJP and regional parties. In the 1990s, the Congress could maintain its voters only in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala. In all other states, Chhibber and Nooruddin point out, Congress lost support. The former one party dominant system has become competitive with a certain degree of fragmentation. Moreover, there are different electoral patterns in the Hindi belt, in states with strong regional parties, and the rest of the country.

The North and Maharashtra

Kanchan Chandra and Virginia Van Dyke, in their chapters on Uttar Pradesh, explore the changing party system and bases of support from two different perspectives. Chandra focuses on the 'ethnification of the party system' while Van Dyke explores BJP and its allies in terms of religious mobilization at the district level.

Chandra's ethnification highlights the 'emergence of a party system in which all major parties make open appeals to ethnic identity central to their political campaigns'. Her analysis complements that of Chhibber and Nooruddin as she analyzes in depth the consequences of low caste support switching from the centrist Congress Party to ethnic parties. The Congress, as well as its three major successor parties, are each multi-ethnic. The key change is in the 'type of ethnic politics'. The Congress 'blended coded ethnic appeals' with other issues. The BJP, the Samajwadi Party (SP), and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) used ethnicity in a more central and direct manner.

In her descriptions of each of the party's election campaigns, Chandra extracts the ethnic content and appeal. The Congress maintained a 'soft' appeal to ethnic categories. But, by 1998, the majority of the upper castes had left the Congress for the BJP, Muslims went to the SP, and Scheduled Castes to the BSP. The Congress and 'its unique brand of ethnic politics' had virtually been eliminated in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP moderated its 'pro-Hindu rhetoric' in 1998, but it 'made no parallel effort to attract Muslim support'. Muslims are no longer its 'target enemies', but neither are they 'target voters'. Thus, it cannot be categorized as a Congress-type centrist party. Nor has it been able to do more than maintain its base, let alone expand it. A winning strategy will necessitate more support from low castes and/or from Muslims.

The BSP's ethnicity redesigns the caste system into two parts. Three Hindu upper castes constitute the 'minority'. The 'majority' or *bahujan* consists of all others: Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs. Political power for each group is Kanshi Ram's direct and forceful appeal. A beginning change in 1996 was reinforced in the 1998 election in increasingly incorporating the upper castes. This change is fiercely resisted by BSP workers. The SP also slices the ethnic pie differently, using religion as well as caste, and in a secondary manner, also uses non-ethnic categories. Despite this seemingly broad appeal, its core bases of support are from Muslims and Yadavs, and it ignores Scheduled Castes.

These 'ethnic fault lines' would appear to result in destabilization and conflict. Moderation, however, rather than extremism is a major finding. Chandra concludes that electoral pressures from heterogeneous constituencies have led parties to 'switch from the strategy of demonizing and excluding outsiders to the strategy of building bridges' or to 'cease hostilities' as in the case of the BJP and Muslims. In this process, a certain degree of empowerment has taken place so that for 'subordinate castes, the state has been transformed from overlord to ally'. Performance and improving the human condition is another matter. Land reform and education 'cannot be addressed through patronage politics but require structural reforms'.

The BJP's religious mobilization in Uttar Pradesh is the focus of Virginia Van Dyke's study. She agrees with Chandra that there weren't any major shifts in the support bases of the major parties in Uttar Pradesh in 1998. The BJP did achieve marginal gains in votes and seats and also benefitted from competition between its three major opponents. Most striking was the disparity between the BJP's national campaign as led by Prime Minister designate Atal Behari Vajpayee and the actual campaign at the local level. Vajpayee took the high ground as he distanced himself from religious mobilization while 'certain politically oriented religious specialists were playing on the communal tension in their districts'. Moreover, some sadhus were associated with mafia figures, and other religious figures exploited their caste backgrounds. Anti-Muslim tactics were also used.

Conceptually, Van Dyke concludes, the political party controls the organization and structure while 'religious specialists are in charge of mass mobilization'. In practice, the dividing line is not so clear as 'some VHP sadhus... ulfill both these roles'. Moreover, there is tension between the religious specialists and the political party, as exists between the VHP and the BJP. These tensions have become even more evident following the election. Van Dyke also points out that religious leaders are 'not adverse to changing their message to continue to be effective in mobilization'. That is possible, she concludes, as the BJP is a communal rather than a fundamentalist party. Reinterpretations take place within the context of a 'politicized Hinduism and the need for numbers of voters'.

Political party fragmentation nationally as detailed by Chhibber and Nooruddin is described in the Bihar chapter by Binoy Prasad. Laloo Yadav split the Janata Dal to form the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) for the 1998 election. His alignment politics included the Congress Party and

its 'Sonia factor', leading to a partial revival of the virtually dormant party with five seats in 1998 compared to two in 1996. Thus, the RJD, regional party, with 17 seats has the 'status of a big brother' to the national, but much smaller, Congress. The RJD, which controlled the state government and its alliance, nonetheless placed second with 23 seats compared to 30 won by the BJP alliance. The Janata Dal without Laloo Yadav won only one seat. All three alliances carefully distributed tickets according to caste considerations. Left parties, no longer allied with Laloo Yadav, were routed, with the two communist parties falling below 4 percent of the vote.

Party politics in Bihar continued to revolve around Laloo Yadav despite his problems with corruption and consequent judicial detention, and Bihar's abysmal reputation. But less so in 1998 compared with earlier in the decade. He maintains his Yadav caste core following while skillfully manipulating alliances. Nonetheless, his alliance total has steadily declined in Lok Sabha elections from 48 in 1991, to 26 in 1996, to 23 in 1998. The BJP–Samata Party alliance, by contrast, has improved from a low of five seats in 1991 to 30 in 1998, filling 'the political space opened by the weakening' of Laloo Yadav.

Finally, Binoy Prasad points out that fragmentation is represented in the 1998 election by only five out of the 54 seats having a majority of votes for the winner. All other seats were won with a plurality. He recommends primary elections with a second round between the two leading contestants if a majority is not forthcoming in the first round. In a sense this is a chicken vs. egg situation. Do the multiple parties result in splitting the votes, or does the splitting of the electorate result in multiple parties?

Maharashtra's results are in contrast to those in north India, as the Congress Party alliance decisively defeated the ruling Shiv Sena–BJP alliance. Congress itself won 33 out of a total of 48 seats, 18 more than in 1996. Sikata Banerjee goes beyond conventional analysis in presenting her detailed party, alliance, and regional data. Shifting voter preferences is less important than 'more people voting for fewer candidates'. Thus, the Shiv Sena–BJP alliance vote total actually went up while its seat total fell from 36 to 10. The BJP vote went from 21.80 percent in 1996 to 22.51 percent, while the Shiv Sena total increased from 16.82 to 19.6 percent in 1998. The Congress's percentage zoomed from 34.78 in 1996 to 43.64 in 1998. This does introduce some odd looking data. For example, there is increased Congress support in all dimensions in

western Maharashtra. Nonetheless, the Shiv Sena has the largest percentage increase.

Less rather than more political party fragmentation appears to be the case in Maharashtra. Scheduled Caste factionalism as mirrored in a splintered Republican Party of India (RPI) changed to a united RPI in alliance with the Congress and Samajwadi Parties. A centrist Congress with effective alliance linkages to the Scheduled and Backward Castes in Maharashtra resurrected images of the Nehru and Indira Gandhi eras, and contrasted strongly with the Congress skeleton in Uttar Pradesh. Sonia Gandhi was a significant factor in Maharashtra, drawing large crowds as elsewhere in India, having a positive electoral effect.

Banerjee's chapter is also excellent on the complex caste nature of the election, especially on the Maratha–OBC dynamics, and on the Dalit and Muslim factors. Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray is especially surprised by the degree of minority electoral support to the Congress alliance in contrast to his alliance. These include neo-Buddhists, particularly former Mahars, as well as Scheduled Castes and Muslims.[15]

South India

The four chapters on south India in this book document the three major results of the 1998 election. First, the BJP continued its rise as a national party via political alliances with regional parties and an increased number of seats in the south. Second, the Congress Party maintained its position generally. Finally, and perhaps the single strongest contrast with 1996, was the near collapse of the Janata Dal in the south as well as a national political force.

This pattern is clearest in Harold Gould's chapter on Karnataka. His subtitle, 'The BJP Achieves Its Southern Beachhead', emphasizes its continued development, as it more than doubled its 1996 total to 13 seats. Sustained organizational efforts by the BJP is one factor. It was also able to take advantage of the Janata Dal problems. Janata Dal's 'effective state machine...began to disintegrate within days' after its enormous electoral victory in 1996.

The Ramakrishna Hegde, H.D. Deve Gowda, and S.R. Bommai combine returned to 'factional conflict', particularly between Vokkaliga leader Gowda and Hegde, as the Janata Dal splintered. Hegde, a Brahmin, had 'in a sense become an "honorary" Lingayat' and served as a bridge to this important caste community. The alliance between his

new regional party, the Lok Shakti, with the BJP consequently brought in a rich electoral harvest from the Lingayats. Gould's regional analysis provides clear data revealing the correlation between the upper plains—'the Lingayat heartland'—and the alliance's electoral success in 1998. The BJP won three and the Lok Shakti two of the seven seats.

The Janata Dal's almost collapse also benefitted the Congress Party. It at least partly pulled itself together to take advantage of the target of opportunity to increase its Lok Sabha total from four to nine. This contrasted with 1996 when it was 'self-destructing' and failed to win a majority of the Lok Sabha seats for the first time since independence.

The BJP won only four seats in Andhra Pradesh in 1998 compared to the Congress Party's 22, and the ruling Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) 12 seats. Nonetheless, that is an increase from zero which, as in Karnataka, marks the BJP's steady organizational development and taking advantage of targets of opportunity. The Janata Dal's problems provided the opportunity for the BJP in Karnataka. In Andhra, according to K. Srinivasulu's chapter, developing 'cracks' in TDP's support base provided the opening for the BJP. TDP's loss of four seats compared to 1996 results from important changes in this regional party.

Srinivasulu focuses on what he terms 'regime change' and the consequent realignment of social forces. It also involves changes in institutional arrangements and policies. He traces these changes from the N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) TDP period (1983–1995). The TDP ended Congress dominance and Indira Gandhi's era of centralization, or what Srinivasulu terms the 'politics of asymmetry'. NTR built a new social alliance of politically emergent forces benefitting from the development process as well as populist schemes such as Rs. 2 for a kilo of rice. With his death and the ascendancy of Chandrababu Naidu, another regime change with alterations in the TDP social coalition occurred. The TDP's pro-poor image, constructed by NTR, changed with the institution of liberal economic reforms and a shift from the agrarian to the business–industrial strata. The urban middle class is 'euphoric about computers, fly-overs and foreign investments'. But Naidu and his TDP have created an opening for the BJP, and/or the Congress Party.

Ramashray Roy, on the other hand, focuses on what he calls the 'fall of the Congress fortress' in Orissa and analyzes the factors that led to it. The Congress had been returned to power in Orissa in 1995 after a lapse of a decade. In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, it swept 16 of the 21 parliamentary seats. However, in 1998, it could retain only four of the seats it had won in 1996, plus one seat from the Janata Dal.

As in Andhra and Karnataka, three political groups competed. The Janata Dal suffered from national and state problems. In Orissa, the death of its leader Biju Patnaik split the party. The majority group headed by his son Naveen Patnaik formed a regional party, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), and entered into an electoral alliance with the BJP. Orissa's regional politics were enhanced as a result of the coalition. The BJP was restricted to the northwestern region and the BJD to the coastal districts. Consequently, both parties had to deal with internal revolts and cope with desertions. The Congress had even greater problems according to Roy's analysis. It had a huge gap between promise and performance, factionalism weakened it at all levels, corruption 'badly tainted its image', and it also suffered greatly from desertions.

In contrast to the Janata Dal and Congress Party, the BJP could project itself more positively. Buoyed by its beginnings in 1996, it projected itself as the only party which could provide stability and described itself as a party that was *mazaboot* (strong), *swachchha* (clean), and *sthira* (stable). It is true that the BJP–BJD alliance swept the polls. However, the alliance remains uneasy as each of the two alliance partners look across its region of electoral supremacy with a covetous eye on the domain of its partner.

Goa, the fourth southern state in this book, has only two parliamentary seats and an electoral history that goes back only to 1963. Nonetheless, as Arthur Rubinoff describes in detail, it has had a complex political history. In 1998, the Congress won both seats, but the BJP established itself as the second party in the state. In one parliamentary constituency where it had never polled more than 18 percent of the vote, it lost by only 417 votes. Its performance, Rubinoff concludes, resembles that of the BJP in neighboring Karnataka and Maharashtra, and it appears to have 'displaced the MGP as the preferred party of the state's Hindu voters'.

National party dominance in Goa in 1998 reverses the 1996 results, when regional parties won both seats. It may also mark the low point of the long-term cleavage in Goan politics between the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), which has stood for merger with Maharashtra, and the United Goans Democratic Party (UGDP), which opposes merger. Personality-based politics continue to be central to Goan politics and now the two national parties are becoming dominant. Major campaigning by the Congress and BJP premier leaders, Sonia Gandhi and Atal Behari Vajpayee, are credited with assisting their parties. Strong

conclusions, however, should be tempered with the changing realities of Goa where 'all parties contain factions that were more interested in defeating intraparty rivals than the formal opposition'. Intense party competition is credited with increasing voter turnout from 56 percent in 1996 to 61 percent in 1998.

Elections & Political Violence

Two chapters focus on states—Kashmir and Punjab—which have been subjected to political violence and terrorism as part of separatist movements. Elections provide one means of gauging system legitimacy. In Kashmir, nominations to the Lok Sabha preceded the direct election in 1967. Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay, in her chapter, reviews all eight Lok Sabha elections in the state and compares them with state assembly elections. Her focus is on the Muslim dominant area in the Valley.

A first basic point, she emphasizes, is that historically 'parliamentary elections have not had the same significance for the Valley population as elections to the regional assembly'. Elections to the Lok Sabha, she states, are primarily a means for the ruling party to allocate seats to high profile candidates. Parliamentary elections are not seen in terms of patronage, such as bureaucratic jobs, or separatist demands. An exception is 1989, when militants succeeded in boycotts resulting in a 5.2 percent voter turnout in the Valley. Otherwise, turnout has ranged from 27.9 percent in 1967 for the first parliamentary election in the Valley, to 50+ percent for elections through 1984. Two elections have been held since the virtual total boycott of 1989. In 1996, the Valley registered a 45.95 percent turnout, dropping to 33.1 percent in 1998. By contrast, turnouts in elections to the assembly in most cases have been higher—at the 70+ level from 1977 through 1987, and then falling to 43.6 percent in 1996.

On the basis of her analysis of the voter turnout in the 1998 election and each of the three constituencies in the Valley, Chowdhari-Tremblay offers two major conclusions. The National Conference and its leader Farooq Abdullah 'remain largely discredited in the Valley'. Second, the prospects for 'reactivating civil society' are not good. Thus, the data suggests that the 'Indian government's faith that the electoral process has been successful in curbing the nationalist movement in the Valley is unwarranted'. On the other hand, Chowdhari-Tremblay states that 'a

certain degree of political order and stability has been reconstituted' and at present there is a 'hiatus in the *azadi* movement'. In this context, she cautions that elections should not be misinterpreted too optimistically. On the contrary, she concludes, India should 'operationalize the autonomy structures for Jammu and Kashmir' or the secessionist movement could be reactivated.

Pramod Kumar in his chapter on Punjab also cites a militant-induced boycott as occasioning low political participation. The 1992 election with a 24.2 percent turnout reversed a long-term trend of over 60 percent voter turnout in Punjab. In Sikh dominated rural areas, the total declined lower to 15.1 percent, which compares with the 5.2 percent turnout in the Valley of Kashmir in 1989. Electoral participation in Punjab then returned to the 60+ level with elections almost every year to significant institutions. These included panchayat and municipal elections, elections to the Sikh temple management committee (SGPC), and to the assembly and parliament. Assembly election registered an almost 80 percent voter turnout in 1997, while parliamentary elections in 1996 and 1998 were at the 60 percent level. Kumar especially notes the 1996 Lok Sabha election as the first normal one 'held without the fear of the gun'. Thus, the 1998 election were the second 'normal' election.

Competitive elections have also helped to reshape party politics toward moderation. Kumar points out that the 'Akali Dal had to shift its agenda from politico-religious identity to non-communal formations'. Somewhat ironically, it can be argued that the alliance of the essentially Sikh-based Akali Dal with the essentially Hindu-based BJP—each often described as a communal party—has led each to non-communal political positions. In contrast to the BJP–BJD alliance in Orissa, where each party presently occupies a distinctive geographical area, the Akali–BJP bases are rural and urban respectively. Alliance problems in Punjab, as discussed by Kumar, relate to economic difficulties and, more recently, to intra-Sikh factionalism between Akali Dal President Badal and SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Moderate versus extremist politics leading to the possibility of 'competitive religiosity' with greater emphasis on Sikh issues could be 'communally divisive'. It is in this context that now normal Punjab could return to some degree of militancy. Democratic politics thus far 'has been successful in keeping these issues to the background'.

Appendix Table 1A.1: Seats Won by Party and Percentage

Party	*Contested*	*Won*	*Vote %*
Bharatiya Janata Party Alliance			
BJP	388	182	25.59
AIADMK (Jayalalitha) (Tamil Nadu)	23	18	1.83
Biju Janata Dal (Orissa)	12	9	1.00
Haryana Lok Dal (R)*	7	4	0.53
Haryana Vikas Party	4	1	0.24
JKN (Kashmir)*	6	3	0.21
Janata Party	16	1	0.12
Lok Shakti (Karnataka)	31	3	0.69
MDMK (Tamil Nadu)	5	3	0.44
PMK	5	4	0.42
SAD (Badal)	8	8	0.81
Samata Party	57	12	1.76
SHS (Shiv Sena)	79	6	1.77
Telugu Desam Party*	35	12	2.77
Trinamul Congress	29	7	2.42
		273	
Congress Party (I) Alliance			
Congress (I)	477	141	25.82
KEC(M) (Kerala)	1	1	0.10
MUL (Muslim League)	7	2	0.22
RJD (Bihar)	116	17	2.78
RPI (Maharashtra)	20	4	0.37
SJP (R) (Uttar Pradesh)	20	1	–
UMFA (Assam)	1	1	0.10
		167	
United Front			
CPI	58	9	1.75
CPM	71	32	5.16
DMK (Tamil Nadu)	18	6	1.44
Forward Block (W. Bengal)	4	2	0.33
Janata Dal	191	6	3.24
RSP (Kerala, W. Bengal)	5	5	0.55
Samajwadi Party	166	20	4.93
TMC(M) (Tamil Nadu)	20	3	1.40
		83	
Others			
AC (Arunachal Pradesh)	2	2	0.05
AIIC(S) (Rajasthan)	9	1	0.12
AIMIM (Andhra)	1	1	0.13
AIRJP (Bihar)	38	1	0.56
ASDC (Assam)	1	1	0.05

Table 1A.1 continued

Table 1A.1 continued

Bahujan Samaj Party	251	5	4.67
MSCP	2	1	0.05
PWPI	2	1	0.07
Sikkim Democratic Front	1	1	0.03
Independents	1915	6	2.37
		20	
Total	4750	543	

* HLD(R) switched from 'Others', and the JKN (National Conference) and Telugu Desam Party from the United Front to the BJP Alliance after the election.

Sources: 1. Election Commission of India, *General Elections, 1998: 12th Lok Sabha* (New Delhi: Election Commission, 1998).
2. Newspaper reports.

Notes and References

1. Objective books on Hindu nationalism are rare. For a detailed scholarly study see Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) which is based on an earlier French book, *Les nationalistes hindous* (Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1993).
2. 'Explanatory Note on Forfeiture of Deposit and Types of Parties' in Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1996 to the Eleventh Lok Sabha, Vol. I (National and State Abstracts)* (New Delhi: Election Commission, September 9, 1996). Page 1 of 1 in the first section of the Report lists political party abbreviations.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The Election Commission of India uses the formal name 'Shiromani Akali Dal' and abbreviates it 'SAD' in its official election reports. In Punjab, this can be confusing as there are several Shiromani Akali Dals functioning at any one point in time, and opposing each other. Thus, the name of the leader is always used as in 'Alkali Dal (Badal)' or 'Akali Dal (Mann)'.
5. Paul Wallace, 'General Elections, 1996: Regional Parties Dominant in Punjab and Haryana', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 46, November 15, 1997, p. 2966.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 2967.
7. Interview in Amritsar, May 21, 1998.
8. Interviews throughout Punjab in May 1998.
9. Interviews in Haryana and Chandigarh in May 1998.
10. For a series of thoughtful and provocative articles on the Indian and Pakistan nuclear tests, and the reactions, see *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/August 1998. The issue is devoted to 'India Bombs the Ban'.
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13. Agence France-Presse as cited in the *New York Times*, October 24, 1998, p. 3.
14. Interview in Chandigarh, May 29, 1998.
15. *The Indian Express*, March 5, 1998. The headline reads: 'Minorities voted us out, says Thackeray'.

2

Party Competition and Fragmentation in Indian National Elections: 1957–1998

Pradeep Chhibber and Irfan Nooruddin

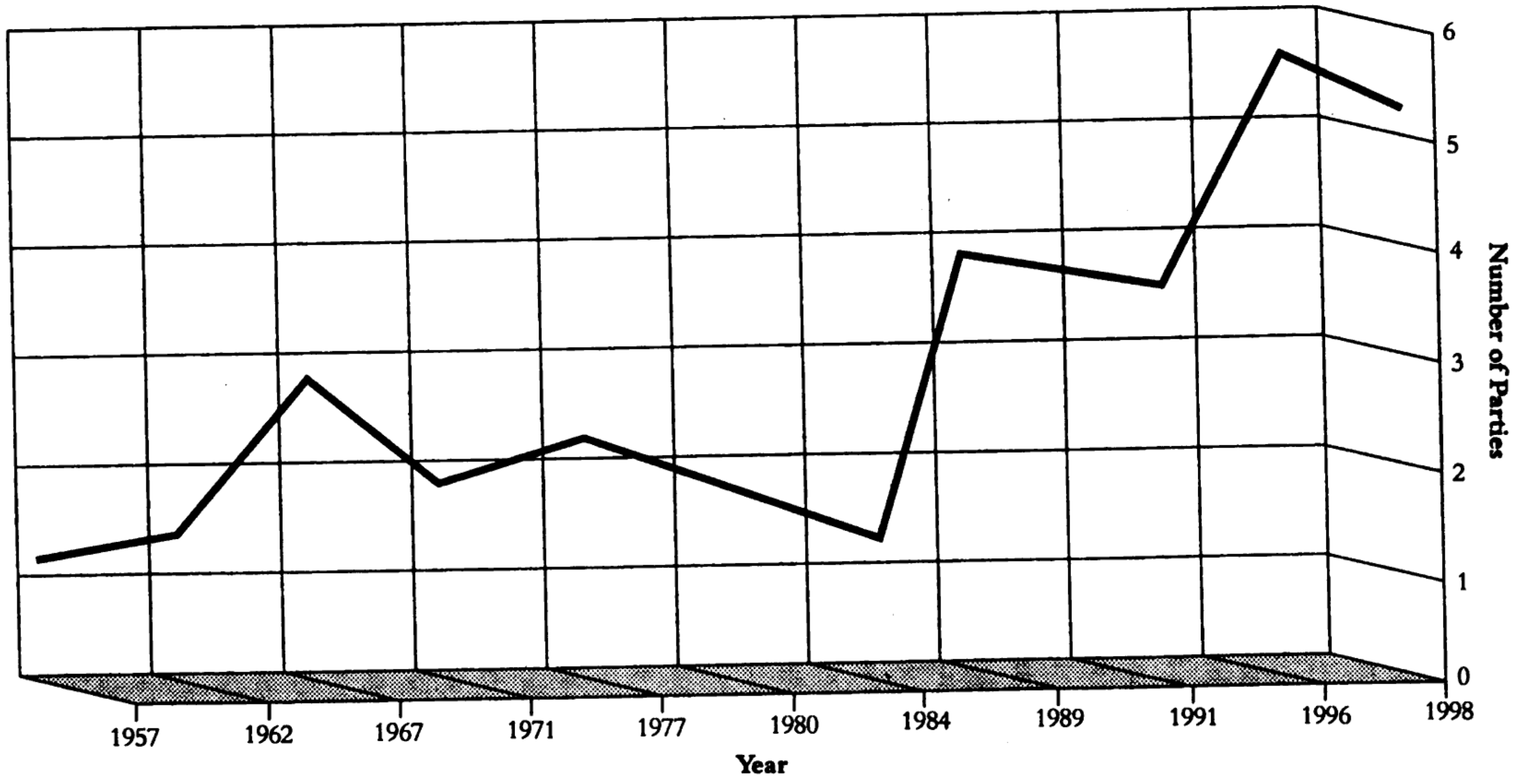
Introduction

India's party system has undergone a transformation over the last decade. The Congress Party, a catch-all party that brought independence in 1947 and governed India for much of the period since then, no longer dominates the electoral scene. From the first election in independent India in 1952 until the 4th General Election in 1967, the Congress Party dominated not only the Lok Sabha but also all state assemblies (Vidhan Sabhas). Since 1967, however, the Indian party system has seen changes, as the Congress's electoral fortunes have fluctuated. By 1998, the proportion of seats held by the Congress in the Lok Sabha declined to just over 25 percent. The Congress's vote share also dropped to 25.8 percent in 1998, as compared to an average of over 40 percent in elections over the four previous decades. The Congress Party's electoral decline has been accompanied by the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The 1990s have been marked by the emergence of the BJP as a powerful electoral force. In 1998, the BJP emerged as the largest vote-getter in national elections for the first time, getting 35.5 percent of the vote in the seats it contested (with 25.6 percent of the overall vote) and the party with the most number of seats in parliament.

In addition to the much commented upon and discussed rise of the BJP, the 1990s have also been a watershed for Indian party politics for a number of other reasons. First, there was the emergence of powerful state-based parties. For the very first time in Indian politics, in 1996, a post-electoral coalition of minor state-based parties constituted the government at the center. The United Front government, which came to govern India in 1996, was constituted primarily by parties which are based in and limited to particular states, including the Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu), the Tamil Maanila Congress (Tamil Nadu), and the Assam Gana Parishad (Assam). The BJP government formed in 1998 too depended upon an electoral alliance with state-based parties such as the Akali Dal, the Telugu Desam Party, and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Party competition in the various states too in 1998 is between different sets of parties. These developments stand in sharp contrast to much of the period after independence, when the Congress was either the dominant party or one of two major parties in all of the states. While the Congress is still in power in some states, it is no longer in power in a majority of states, and in some states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Congress is not even the third largest party. The emergence of state parties has a second consequence for Indian electoral politics—an increase in the number of parties that are represented in parliament. The effective number of parties in the Lok Sabha has increased from less than two during the 1950s and 1960s—the period of one-party dominance—to more than five in 1996 (see Figure 2.1).[1]

This chapter claims that a key feature of party politics in India in the 1990s is the emergence of two party competition. It is this two party competition that accounts both for the increasing competitiveness of Indian electoral politics and the fragmentation of the party system. While the degree of party competition has increased in all the regions of India, greater fragmentation is, however, most noticeable in the Hindi speaking belt. The first part of the chapter provides evidence of the increase in party competition in the 1990s and then attributes this competitiveness to two party competition. This section also discusses whether the increased competitiveness can be attributed to the mobilization of new voters and whether two party competition has an effect on competitiveness independent of the number of voters who turnout to vote. The next segment turns to an examination of the fragmentation of the party system and notes that the fragmentation is most prevalent in the Hindi speaking region and, more importantly, that it too is a function of the

Figure 2.1: Effective Number of Parties in the Lok Sabha, 1957–1998



Sources: 1. David Butler, A. Lahiri and P. Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).
2. Election Commission.

Note: See text for details on the calculation of the effective number of parties.

emergence of a more competitive two party system in the constituencies. The final part of the chapter examines whether the BJP, regional parties, and the Congress trade votes. In other words, do these parties mobilize votes at each other's expense nationally or does that continue to be only a significant regional component to the mobilizational efforts of the political parties in India and that parties rarely lose or gain votes to each other nationally.

Increase in Party Competition

The most distinguishing characteristic of elections in the 1990s in India is the increase in party competition. The competitiveness of the party system was measured through the *winning differential*—the difference between the vote share of the first and second parties in Lok Sabha elections. This is an appropriate measure for the competitiveness of a system since a constituency is more competitive in which the margin of victory between the first and second placed parties is narrower than in other constituencies where the margin of victory is larger. In the general elections since 1957, the winning differential has dropped from an average of 20 percent for all constituencies through 1989 to about 10 percent in 1998. The drop in the winning differential is, however, not due to changes in the percent of votes received by the largest party. The share of votes received by the winning party has indeed dropped (from 50 percent for elections till 1967 to 47 percent in the 1990s), but this change is not as large as the drop in the winning differential (Table 2.1). In other words, the drop in the winning differential is due to the larger vote share received by the second placed party in the constituencies. Further evidence that two parties are competing more actively now comes from an examination of the vote share of the other parties, which even though it fluctuates over time, has remained pretty much the same since 1957 (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1: Increase in Competitiveness of the Party System Over Time, 1957–1998

	1957–1967	*1967–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Winning percentage	50.40	55.19	47.43	45.06	47.11
Winning differential	20.26	21.16	13.47	11.84	10.51
Fragmentation 'n'	2.63	2.27	2.73	3.04	2.63

Note: Average across all constituencies.

Table 2.2: Average Vote Share of Parties Other than the Two Main Parties

Year	*Vote Share (% of Votes Cast)*
1957	14
1962	19
1967	20
1971	13
1977	04
1980	15
1984	09
1989	11
1991	18
1996	23
1998	17

Note: Average across all constituencies.

A second feature of contemporary Indian electoral politics is fragmentation of the party system. The extent of fragmentation was measured by calculating the average effective number of parties in the various constituencies for all Lok Sabha elections. The effective number of parties has increased from 2.27 in the 1970s and 1980s to almost 3 in the 1990s (Table 2.1). Changes in the extent of fragmentation do not, however, parallel changes in competitiveness. Party fragmentation in 1998 looked similar to that during the period of Congress dominance (1957 to 1967) but, as noted earlier, the difference in the vote share of the top two parties dropped in the 1990s, especially when compared to earlier periods. Hence, there is an increase in party competition in the 1990s but not in party fragmentation which looks similar to the period of Congress dominance, i.e., 1957 to 1967.[2]

Explaining Electoral Competitiveness

What explains this increase in competitiveness? Is it the vote share of the second party that drives competitiveness or is it, as contemporary scholars of electoral politics have noted, due to the mobilization of hitherto unmobilized segments into the electoral arena.[3] Does the mobilization of new voters account for the greater degree of competitiveness? To address this question, a statistical model was estimated for the entire set of constituencies for all elections since 1957. The mobilization of new voters was measured through the voter turnout (the

percent of valid votes cast as a proportion of the total electorate) in a constituency. The dependent variable in the regression analysis was the degree of competitiveness measured as the differential between the votes received by the first and the second placed parties in a constituency. Two sets of controls were added to the model—region and time. The region within which a constituency lies is an important control variable as there are well known regional effects that influence voting behavior and party politics across regions.[4] To this end the various states were combined to yield three broad regional categorizations—the Hindi speaking belt (Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), states where regional parties are strong (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal), and other states (Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa). The model estimated also controlling for the period during which elections were held. Time is an important variable as the 'wave-like' nature of Indian elections has been a focus of many analyses.[5] The various elections were regrouped into three categories: the years of the undivided Congress (1957, 1962, and 1967); the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years—termed the Gandhi period (1971, 1977, 1980, 1984, and 1989); and the elections held in the 1990s. As increased party competition could also occur because of the votes received by minor parties (parties that did not place either first or second in a constituency), a final control variable included in the model was the vote share of minor parties.[6] The key independent variable was the proportion of votes received by the second placed party. There is no a priori reason to expect a consistent effect on winning differential of the mobilizational efforts of the second placed party. The winning differential can decline because of a number of reasons, including the efforts of minor parties and an electoral collapse of the first placed party.

The results provide no support for the hypothesis that increased party competition is attributable to greater mobilization of voters to the polls. In fact, it is the vote share of the second party that has a major impact on the competitiveness of the party system (understood as the winning differential). The negative coefficient on the variable of interest—the vote share of the second party—indicates that as the vote share of the second party increases, the vote differential drops or the degree of competitiveness increases. As Table 2.3 indicates, the influence of regional and temporal effects too have an independent impact on the degree of competitiveness. But, the coefficient on the vote share of the second party is the largest and its effects overshadow the impact of other

variables such as time, region, and even turnout. To test the robustness of our results, we estimated two other specifications of the same basic model. In one we dropped the vote share of the rest of the parties, while in the other we dropped only the vote share of the second party. These changes did not alter our results significantly. In all three versions of the model, the effect of turnout on competitiveness is negligible and not statistically significant. Moreover, the much larger relative impact of the second party compared to other smaller parties is borne out by the fact that the coefficient on the second party vote share is much larger than that on the vote share of the remainder of parties. Both effects were significant at conventional levels of statistical significance.

Table 2.3: Explaining Competitiveness as a Function of Two Party Competition (OLS Models)

Dependent Variable	*Winning Differential*		
Vote share of second party	−195.10	−119.14	
	(1.21)	(2.11)	
Vote share of other parties	−98.34		−23.26
	(0.67)		(1.49)
Turnout	0.001	0.03	−0.17
	(0.003)	(0.15)	(0.22)
Regional states	0.04	−1.22	−1.38
	(0.07)	(0.36)	(0.57)
Hindi belt	−0.28	−5.11	0.64
	(0.08)	(0.35)	(0.52)
Gandhi period (1971–1989)	0.24	7.07	4.74
	(0.05)	(0.35)	(90.48)
1990s	−1.82	−1.98	−2.82
	(0.11)	(0.38)	(0.46)
Constant	97.95	56.03	29.23
	(0.47)	(1.02)	(1.30)
R^2	0.9764	0.5477	0.1357
N	5117	5117	5117

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Vote shares and turnout are measured in percentages. All other independent variables are dichotomous.

The results (Table 2.3) provide quite clear support for the argument advanced in the paper—it is the vote share of the second party that influences competitiveness. The negative coefficient on the vote share of the second party suggests that as the second party mobilizes a greater

segment of the electorate, the winning differential drops and the extent of competitiveness increases. The surprising result is that turnout does not have a significant effect on the degree of competitiveness of a constituency. There are significant temporal and regional effects however. The Hindi belt was more competitive when compared to the other states which are the comparison set, whereas the states with strong regional parties did not display greater competitiveness. The positive coefficient of the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years and the negative coefficient for the variable representing the 1990s suggest that elections in the 1990s are more competitive than those held during the Gandhi period.

Explaining Turnout

But, what drives turnout? Are there particular configurations of party politics that lead to larger turnout in some constituencies than others. Table 2.4 reports the results of a regression analysis in which turnout was sought to be explained as a function of the effective number of parties in a constituency. The results of the analysis are interesting for they provide unequivocal evidence that, even controlling for time effects, the number of parties influences turnout significantly. In other words, there is likely to be a greater mobilization of voters when there are two parties competing in a constituency.

The result that mobilization is higher when there is two party competition requires some explanation as the common expectation in contemporary political science is that turnout is lower in two party systems. Why then do we see greater mobilization of voters in those constituencies where there are close to two parties? If one party dominates the electoral arena and voters are aware of that, there is little incentive for most of them to turnout to vote, for their ability to influence the outcome is limited. If there are two parties that are active competitors in a constituency, they will attempt to build a winning coalition by reaching across to various groups that exist in most constituencies and in the process mobilize more voters, thereby generating greater turnout. On average, in a two party system, voters have a greater probability of their vote influencing the outcome and hence there is higher turnout. But, what if there are more than two parties that are actively seeking votes in a constituency? Turnout, as Table 2.4 indicates, is lower when there are more than two parties in a constituency. The reason for this lower turnout lies in the nature of the social divisions and the politics of swing that characterize Indian elections.

Table 2.4: Explaining Turnout as a Function of Level of Party Fragmentation (OLS Model)

Dependent Variable	*N*
Two party system	2.55**
	(0.7699)
More than two parties	0.431*
	(0.8230)
Three or more parties	−3.329**
	(0.8243)
1962	4.439**
	(0.9289)
1967	9.483**
	(0.8811)
1971	2.628**
	(0.8923)
1977	6.773**
	(0.8617)
1980	4.223**
	(0.8352)
1984	9.602**
	(0.8594)
1989	9.128**
	(0.8726)
1991	4.344**
	(0.9138)
1996	10.680**
	(0.9519)
1998	13.942**
	(0.8375)
Constant	49.233**
	(1.0345)
R^2	0.1299
N	5133

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.
* Significant at the .05 level.
** Significant at the .01 level.

Each party has a core group of voters that they can count on. Those members of the district electorate that do not fall into one such core group can be referred to as *swing* voters.[7] As the term implies, these

voters can determine the outcome of elections since a shift in their support alters the balance between parties. In a one party dominant system, the dominant party does not need to mobilize the swing vote since its core support bloc is large enough to ensure victory. The swing vote, however, is critical in two party systems. When an election is being contested between two parties, each party targets the swing vote segment of society knowing fully well that the winner of that battle wins the election. Therefore, each party makes appeals to these voters and attempts to mobilize their support. This explains why the regression presented in Table 2.4 suggests that turnout in districts where two parties contest the elections increases compared to districts with one dominant party. This notion of the swing voter also explains why turnout drops as fragmentation increases past two parties. In a district where the effective number of parties is three or more, most of the electorate falls into the core group category of some party or the other. In other words, the size of the swing bloc decreases. Mobilization efforts of the party therefore focus on core voters and fewer new, i.e., swing, voters are brought into the fray.

The analysis of election results since 1957 suggests that two things are happening. First, there is greater two party competition in the 1990s than ever before. Votes of minor parties (not the top two parties in a constituency) have remained pretty much the same (Table 2.2). The increase in party competition is not consistent over time, for two parties got a larger share of the votes during the years 1971–1989 (the Gandhi years) than earlier or later. Party competition has increased in all regions of the country (Table 2.5). In 1998, winning differentials across various regions of India were within two percentage points of each other. The winning differential has dropped from a high of almost 20 percent in the Gandhi years to approximately 10 percent across all regions of India. Further, it is the emergence of the second party as a viable competitor in most constituencies that drives turnout—the 'swing' in a constituency.

Party Fragmentation

Party fragmentation does not, however, follow the same trend as winning differential. The effective number of parties has indeed increased

Table 2.5: Competitiveness by Region Over Time*

	1957–1967	*1971–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Hindi belt states	15.4	24.0	12.6	11.3	9.0
Regional states	13.3	18.3	17.0	13.4	10.9
Other states	19.6	22.5	14.5	12.2	11.7

* Entries are the winning differential in % of votes.

Hindi belt = Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Regional = Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.

Others = Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa.

in the 1990s, especially when compared to the Gandhi decades. This increase has happened in all regions of India, but the extent of party fragmentation is the highest in the Hindi belt where the average effective number of parties across constituencies was well over three for the 1991 and 1996 General Elections, dropping to slightly below three for the 1998 election. In other words, the Hindi belt has close to a three party system whereas the other parts of the country have more stable party systems with an average of approximately two-and-a-half parties across the regions (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Fragmentation by Region Over Time

	1957–1967	*1971–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Hindi belt states	3.20	2.45	3.13	3.39	2.87
Regional states	2.53	2.20	2.48	2.80	2.57
Other states	2.30	2.20	2.52	2.91	2.49

Hindi belt = Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Regional = Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.

Others = Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa.

What explains this increased fragmentation? Party fragmentation too, in India's single member simple plurality (or first past the post) electoral system, is not driven by increased turnout but the degree of competition between the top two parties in a constituency. The argument is that if a competitor party is successful in mobilizing votes for itself, then

third parties have less success in the district since the principal rival garners those votes. If, on the other hand, the rival party is not very competitive, other parties can gain a significant share of the votes and play a role in government. A glance back at Table 2.1 provides clear indication that the competitiveness of the Indian electoral scene is increasing. The average winning percentage of votes has dropped only 3 percent over the 40 years of Indian electoral history, but the drop in winning differential is almost a full 10 percent. Clearly, this competitiveness is a result of a resurgent rival. The result of this is that increased competitiveness has lead to fragmentation—what used to be a one party district changes to having at least two competitive parties and possibly more.

This argument is borne out well by Table 2.7.[8] In this multiple regression, we test the impact of turnout levels and competitiveness, as

Table 2.7: Explaining Fragmentation by Turnout and Competitiveness

Dependent Variable	*Number of Parties*	
Turnout	−0.008**	−0.007**
	(0.0008)	(0.0009)
Winning differential	−1.975**	−1.372**
	(0.0542)	(0.0843)
Hindi region* winning difference		−1.332**
		(0.1156)
Regional State* winning difference		0.092
		(0.1203)
Hindi belt	0.412**	0.663**
	(0.0207)	(0.0366)
Regional state	0.044*	0.036
	(0.0209)	(0.0351)
Gandhi period (1971–1989)	−0.336**	−0.328**
	(0.0236)	(0.0232)
Post-Indira period (1991–1998)	0.024	0.014
	(0.0283)	(0.0233)
Constant	3.323**	3.143**
	(0.0547)	(0.0564)
R^2	0.334	0.351
N	5117	5117

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.
* Significant at the .05 level.
** Significant at the .01 level.

measured by winning differential, on party fragmentation in a constituency measured as the number of parties in a constituency. As hypothesized, turnout has a negligible effect on the effective number of parties in a district. Winning differential, a measure of second party competitiveness, on the other hand, is significant and has a strong negative impact on fragmentation.

The regional effects are as we expected as well. In the Hindi belt, where the BJP's rise has supplemented existing competition between the Congress and regional parties, the effective number of parties has increased. The BJP, as will be discussed further later, has almost doubled its vote share in the Hindi belt but has not wiped out any other competitor. Its competitiveness, therefore, leads to an increase in 'N'. In states with strong regional parties, fragmentation is lower and not significant at any conventional levels of significance.[9]

Finally, the dummy variables for time periods corroborate our story as well. Compared to the early Nehru period, fragmentation decreased significantly in the Indira period. In the most recent elections however, the effective number of parties has returned to pre-1970 levels and shows no significant change from that in the first period of Indian history. These results do not change even if we control for different competitiveness effects by region.

The conventional wisdom that party competitiveness has increased is confirmed by our findings, but the situation is more complex than it appears. The conventional wisdom is only true if one compares the 1990s to the prior period, i.e., 1971–1989. But if one looks at the entire electoral history of India, then it is not quite true. In fact, fragmentation in the 1990s mirrors that of the first period from 1957–1967. Why? We argue that in certain states regional parties replaced the Congress Party.

The Congress is still a major player at the national level. But at the district level the emergence of regional parties has changed the face of party competition. Where regional parties are strong, they have usurped the position of smaller parties opposing the Congress, thereby keeping the effective number of parties around two. But where there exist weak regional parties, the Congress maintains a strong presence *in addition to* the other national parties that exist there. This explains why fragmentation is higher in the Hindi belt where the major competition is between the Congress and the BJP, in addition to regional parties, than in states with strong regional parties.

Thus, party fragmentation in India today can be explained by what is happening in the Hindi belt. The rise of the BJP has introduced a

powerful new force into the electoral scene of that region, and elections are now decided by competition between the BJP and its allies, the Congress, and other parties. Using turnout and vote share data at the district level, we tracked the performance of various parties over time and by region. The indicator used is a measure of mobilization, where

$$Mobilization_{ij} = Voteshare_{ij} \times Turnout_j$$

for party i in district j. In other words, multiplying the votes a party receives in a particular district by the turnout in that district tells us how much of the electorate the party was able to mobilize into voting. Since one of the primary functions of political parties is such mobilization, such data allows us to examine trends in mobilization to see which parties are attracting the voting members of society.

Table 2.8 shows mobilization by major groups of parties over time. Immediately, certain trends jump out. The Congress has been decimated in the 1990s. Although it maintained its average mobilization rates till 1989, by 1998 the Congress had experienced a 10 percent drop in its share of mobilization. Two things could be happening here: first, people who previously voted for the Congress could be staying home and not voting; or second, other parties might be wooing Congress supporters over to their side. Over the same time period, the biggest gainer, to no one's surprise, has been the BJP. From being responsible for less than 5 percent of the turnout in the early elections, the BJP has grown rapidly and now competes with the Congress for the top spot in terms of mobilization of voters. Indeed, its 10 percent increase mirrors exactly the decline of the Congress. National parties, such as the JD, SWA, and

Table 2.8: Mobilization by Party Over Time

Party	*1957–1967*	*1971–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Congress	23.66	24.16	19.59	16.58	15.57
BJP	4.36	3.04	10.85	11.66	15.21
Left	5.49	4.98	4.78	4.08	4.23
National	9.01	12	6.51	4.77	2.02
Regional	1.48	3.82	4	6.45	9.28

Congress = INC, INC I. National = Swatantra, SSP, Janata Dal, PSP, Lok Dal, and Janata Party.
BJP = BJP, BJS.
Left = CPI, CPM. Regional = Akali Dal, Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, AIADMK, DMK, Telugu Desam, and TMC.

SSP have also lost support over time and now turnout fewer voters collectively than does the Left. On the flip side of this decline is the growth of regional parties. These smaller parties have experienced a marked expansion in the 1990s, going from less than a 4 percent average in the 1970s and 1980s to almost 10 percent in 1998. Amidst these changes, the Left wing has remained remarkably constant, maintaining its share of the proportion of voters it mobilizes successfully.

The biggest gainer of votes in the Hindi belt has been the BJP (Table 2.9). The Congress share of mobilized voters in this region is half what it was in the period of Congress dominance, while the BJP now mobilizes more than two times what it did prior to 1970. Interestingly, national parties have also lost a great deal of support in these states. But with the rise of some weak regional parties in the Hindi belt, it is clear that fragmentation has gone up. Competition in these states is three-pronged, with the Congress, BJP, and the regional party 'combine' being the major players.

Table 2.9: Mobilization by Party Over Time in the Hindi Belt

Party	*1957–1967*	*1971–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Congress	19.40	20.86	14.39	9.49	10.36
BJP	7.55	4.81	14.61	15.98	20.09
National	9.54	16.47	9.85	5.67	1.75
Left	2.20	1.65	1.60	1.15	0.84
Regional	0.00	0.00	0.03	4.02	6.84

Congress = INC, INC I. National = SWA, SSP, JD, PSP, BLD, JNP, JNP S.
BJP = BJP, BJS. Regional = SADM, SAD, SP, SHS, ADMK, ADK, DMK, TDP, TMC.
Left = CPI, CPM.

In states with strong regional parties (Table 2.10), the big losers have been the national parties and the Congress Party. The biggest gainers, as would be imagined, are the regional parties in these states which more than quadrupled their share of mobilized voters. The Congress Party continues to be one of the largest mobilizers in the region, but its decline is still prodigious—over 10 percent. Particularly troubling for the Congress is that this drop is recent and drastic. Indeed, it has occurred in just the last election. Over the first 10 elections in our sample, i.e., between 1957 and 1996, the Congress was able to mobilize at least 24 percent of the electorate to support it at the polls. In 1998,

Table 2.10: Mobilization by Party Over Time in Regional States

Party	*1957–1967*	*1971–1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
Congress	27.30	25.22	25.21	24.21	16.25
BJP	1.68	0.57	4.95	5.19	7.66
National	6.63	4.67	1.46	0.88	0.60
Left	12.27	12.24	11.49	12.53	11.43
Regional	4.41	11.57	10.53	11.36	15.69

Congress = INC, INC I.
BJP = BJP, BJS.
Left = CPI, CPM.
National = SWA, SSP, JD, PSP, BLD, JNP, JNP S.
Regional = SADM, SAD, SP, SHS, ADMK, ADK, DMK, TDP, TMC.

however, this figure dropped to barely 16 percent. This loss of dominance has cost the Congress Party nationally as well, especially since earlier in the 1990s the Congress counted on the regional states to compensate for poor performances in the Hindi belt.

To answer the question of where each party bloc has been making advances or suffering losses, we estimated a series of multiple regressions for each party's mobilization, controlling for time and state effects, as well as the other parties' mobilization. In such a model, the coefficient on each state's dummy variable indicates whether or not a particular party gained (+ve sign) or lost (-ve sign) in a given period of Indian election history.[10] The results are illuminating and confirmatory of our hypotheses (Table 2.11).

The effects of each party on the mobilization efforts of other parties are very small and close to zero. In other words, parties do not trade

Table 2.11: Vote Trading Between Parties*

Period	*BJP*	*Congress*	*Regional bloc*
1957–1967	–	Other national parties	–
1967–1989	Congress Regional parties	BJP	BJP
1991–1998	Congress	BJP Regional parties	Congress

Entries indicate which parties are trading votes with whom.

* This table is constructed from the results of a series of multiple regressions in which we estimated each party's mobilization as a function of all other parties' mobilization, controlling for time and state effects. Only those coefficients that were significant at the 0.10 level are discussed.

votes with each other nationally. A few trends that conform to our expectations can be discerned from the results. For instance, in the era of Congress dominance, the Congress Party mobilized votes at the expense of other national parties. During the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years, however, the face of party politics changed as parties began to trade votes. The BJP traded votes with regional and national parties whereas the Congress Party and regional parties traded votes only with the BJP and not with each other. By the 1990s, the picture changed again. The BJP no longer traded votes with regional parties, but only with the Congress Party which was also exchanging support with regional parties. In other words, in the 1990s, in sharp contrast to the earlier era, the Congress's votes were moving to the BJP and regional parties and vice versa.

While these inter-party effects do exist, their overall impact is marginal at best. Instead, it appears that the mobilization story is best told in terms of state effects for each party. From 1957 to 1967, the interval we have dubbed the period of Congress dominance, the Congress made gains in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, but lost ground in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. In the states that the Congress lost voters, the BJP was the big gainer, winning support in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, as well as Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab.

Little changed over the next 20-year span. In the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi period, the Congress maintained its position in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, and added Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Bihar continued to be a problem for the Congress, and they also mobilized fewer voters in Kerala than previously. The BJP maintained its dominance in the Hindi belt with higher mobilization figures in Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. They also gained in Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. The Indira period witnessed the emergence of regionally-based parties as an alternative to the national 'catch-all' parties. The SADM, SAD, SP, SHS, AIADMK, ADK, DMK, TDP, and TMC are grouped here into a regional bloc. Their gains were in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.

The 1990s, finally, are a testament to the devastation of the Congress Party. From its early dominance over much of the country, when we control for the efforts of other parties, the Congress was able to

mobilize voters in only three states: Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala. In *all* the other states, the Congress lost support. The BJP's stranglehold over the Hindi belt continued with gains in Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. And the regional parties maintained their position in Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.

Stepping back from this detailed state-level look at party mobilization efforts allows us to draw some conclusions as to which party is gaining at another's expense. Compared to the Nehru period of Congress dominance over Indian politics, the Congress's biggest losses have come in the Hindi belt, the same region that the BJP has established control over. Likewise, regional parties have made their gains at the expense of both the Congress and the BJP in a few states, but are not much of a presence anywhere else.

Conclusion

The Indian electoral system has indeed undergone a transformation in the 1990s. It has evolved from a one party dominant system to a competitive two party electoral setting. Contrary to typical expectations, this increase in competitiveness is not a result of rising turnout; rather, it is due to the increased vitality of second, or rival, parties that are more effectively challenging the incumbent party in their district. This shift to a competitive two party system has had effects on turnout and mobilization of voters by the parties. Compared to districts where one party dominates, turnout in districts with two effective parties is higher due to the mobilization of swing voters. However, once fragmentation increases to three or more effective parties, both mobilization and turnout drop.

Mobilization of voters is traditionally considered a principal function of political parties. Our study suggests that one party's mobilization is not affected much by the efforts of other parties. However, strong time and state effects do exist. Over time, turnout and competitiveness have increased. Further, there has been a trichotomization of the Indian political scene, with different scenarios being played out in states in the Hindi belt, in states with strong regional parties, and the rest of the country. These regional effects are strong and cannot be ignored. In sum, Indian politics can no longer be studied adequately by solely focusing on the national level. The action, as it were, is at the local and state levels and it is here that future analyses of Indian politics must concentrate.

Notes and References

1. The number of parties 'N' is calculated using the widely accepted formula first advocated by Maarku Laakso and Rein Taagepera ('Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 12, 1979, pp. 3–27). N is the inverse of the Hersfindhal concentration index and is measured as $1/\Sigma p_i^2$, where p_i can be the proportion of the popular votes received by party *i* in an election or the proportion of seats in the legislature controlled by party *i*. For details on N and other measures see, Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, 'Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2, June 1986, pp. 329–42. In Figure 2.2, the number of effective parties was calculated using the proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha received by the various parties.
2. This finding is discussed in more detail later in the paper.
3. Paul Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
4. *Ibid.* Also see, Pradeep K. Chhibber and John Petrocik, 'The Puzzle of Indian Politics: Social Cleavages and the Indian Party System', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1989, pp. 191–210.
5. Vanderbok offers a detailed assessment of the value of 'waves' in understanding Indian elections. See, William Vanderbok, 'The Tiger Triumphant: The Mobilization and Alignment of the Indian Electorate', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 20, No. 2, April 1990, pp. 237–61. Also see, Lloyd I. Rudolph and Sussane H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
6. Minor parties could receive votes at the expense of both the first and second placed parties and hence influence the winning differential.
7. Butler, Roy, and Lahiri offer a clear explanation of what a swing stands for. They also came up with this phrase as a key to explaining election results in India. See, David Butler, P. Roy, and A. Lahiri, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).
8. We also ran these regressions with dummies for each election year. Our results are robust and do not change when we add these dummy variables.
9. The effect of interaction terms is evaluated by using derivatives. Thus, to find the effect of increased competitiveness in the Hindi belt, we differentiate the model equation with respect to competitiveness and allow the Hindi belt variable to take the value equal to 1, while the regional belt variable is set at zero. The resulting number is the coefficient of interest.
10. Only states that had coefficients significant at the 0.05 level are discussed here.

3

Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh: The Ethnification of the Party System and its Consequences[1]

Kanchan Chandra

Post-Congress politics in Uttar Pradesh, seen from the vantage point of the 1998 election, is characterized by two transformations: the 'second democratic upsurge' and the 'ethnification' of the party system. The 'second democratic upsurge' refers to the dramatic surge in participation in the political process by members of subordinate social groups.[2] 'Ethnification' of the party system refers to the emergence of a party system in which all major parties make open appeals to ethnic identity central to their political campaigns. This article focuses attention on the second of the two transformations. That increasing numbers of previously marginalized groups are beginning to enter the political arena is important. Equally important, however, is an understanding of the terms on which they are being inducted. The fact that the 'second democratic upsurge' is being channeled for the first time in Uttar Pradesh through an ethnic party system has profound consequences for politics in Uttar Pradesh and other states witnessing a similar phenomenon in the wake of widespread Congress decline. Part I of the article describes the 'ethnification' of the party system in Uttar Pradesh. Part II analyzes

the consequences of channeling the interests of subordinate social groups through ethnic parties rather than the centrist Congress party.

The 'Ethnification' of the Party System

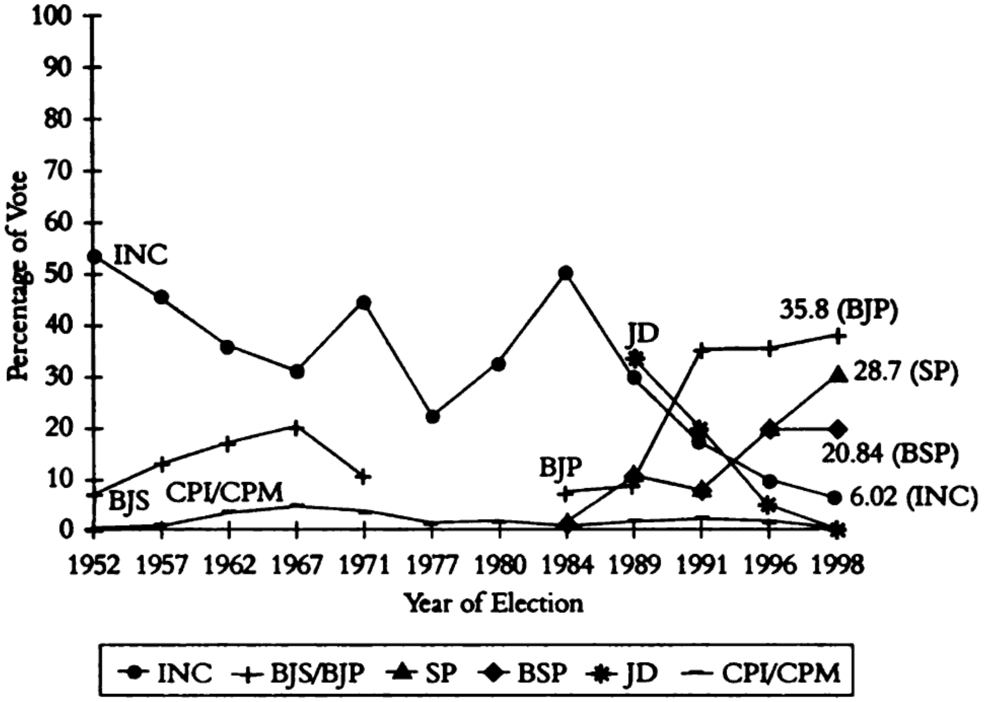
I use the term 'ethnicity' here to mean nominal membership in an ascriptive category including race, language, caste, religion, or region. Membership in an ethnic category is inherited: an individual in Uttar Pradesh, for example, might be born a Muslim Teli from Rohillkhand; a Shilpkar from Kumaon; or a Brahmin from Poorvanchal. However, as the examples illustrate, we are usually born with nominal membership in multiple categories. In political discourse within India, the term 'ethnic' is conventionally applied to the politics of language and region but not of caste and religion. While important differences exist between each of these ascriptive categories, grouping them together under a common label of 'ethnic' allows me to highlight neglected but important similarities in the form of politics that accompanies them.

The term 'ethnification' as defined here refers to a discursive shift in the political arena from the covert to the overt use of ethnic identity in political campaigns by all major political parties. It is best thought of as a continuous variable: once any major party in a party system makes an open appeal to ethnic identity central to its political program, the process of ethnification can be said to have begun. The greater the number of parties appealing to ethnic identity, the greater the degree of ethnification of the party system.

The 'ethnification' of the party system in Uttar Pradesh has come about through the virtual disappearance of the Congress, and its replacement by three successor parties: the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Samajwadi Party (SP), and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 summarize the electoral history of the Congress and other contemporary political parties in parliamentary elections in Uttar Pradesh.[3]

The beginnings of this transformation can be traced to 1989, when the vote share of the Congress plunged almost 20 percentage points to 31.8 percent in the parliamentary election and it lost control of the state government. Before 1989, the Congress had won a majority of seats in every parliamentary election in Uttar Pradesh, with the dramatic exception of the 1977 election. It had also been the governing party in Uttar Pradesh for most of the post-independence period, barring three

Figure 3.1: Party Performance in Uttar Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections, 1952–1998



brief intervals of opposition rule that added up to only four years. The 1989 parliamentary and assembly elections, however, marked the beginning of the precipitous decline of the Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh politics. With only 6 percent of the vote in 1998, the Congress Party has practically disappeared from the political arena.

The year 1989 is also the turning point in the electoral history of the successor parties. The BJP surged ahead between 1989 and 1991, and has since become the single largest party in Uttar Pradesh. It won 36 percent of the vote in the 1998 election. The Janata Dal, newly created in 1989, obtained majority of the parliamentary seats and a plurality of seats in the state legislative assembly in the 1989 election. The Samajwadi Party was born in 1992 out of a series of splinters in the Janata Dal. It won 29 percent of the vote in the 1998 election and is now the second largest party in Uttar Pradesh. The BSP, created in 1984, also obtained a burst of support in 1989. With 21 percent of the vote in 1998, it is now the third force in Uttar Pradesh politics.

The key aspect of the replacement of the Congress by the BJP, the SP, and the BSP is not the replacement of a 'non-ethnic' party with a collection of 'ethnic' parties, since the Congress has also invoked ethnic identities in its political campaigns in the past, especially at the local

Table 3.1: Party Performance in Uttar Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections, 1952–1998

Party	*1952*	*1957*	*1962*	*1967*	*1971*	*1977*	*1980*	*1984*	*1989*	*1991*	*1996*	*1998*
INC	53	46.3	38.2	33.4	48.6	25	35.9	51.03	31.77	18.28	8.14	6.02
BJS/BJP	7.3	14.8	17.6	22.2	12.3	–	–	6.42	7.58	32.83	33.44	35.8
SP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	20.84	28.7
BSP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.18	9.93	8.7	20.61	20.9
JD	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	35.3	21.62	4.26	0.47
CPI/CPM (Combined)	0.3	1.7	3.6	4.5	3.9	1.2	1.7	1.68	1.81	1.77	1.04	0.41

Sources: The data in this table for all elections before 1984 is from David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, ***India Decides**: **Elections 1952–1995*** (New Delhi: Living Media, 1996). The data for all elections after 1984 is from the official reports published by the Election Commission of India. The vote percentage of the BSP in 1984 is obtained from ***The Oppressed Indian***, April 1985.

Official data is not available for the BSP performance in the 1984 election in Uttar Pradesh, since the BSP was not recognized by the Election Commission of India until after the election. BSP candidates in the official results for 1984, therefore, are listed as independents.

The table records only the history of contemporary political parties in Uttar Pradesh. It is not meant to be a summary of the performance of all parties in UP's political history. For example, it leaves out the Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Swatantra Party, and the Socialist Party, all of which have been important in the politics of Uttar Pradesh in the past.

level. Nor is it, as is usually understood, the replacement of a single multi-ethnic party with a collection of 'mono-ethnic' parties. The three successor parties are all multi-ethnic, although the coalitions they seek to build are narrower that those built by the Congress: the BJP seeks to weld together all Hindu castes, while the SP and the BSP seek to build a coalition of subordinate Hindu castes and Muslims. Rather, the key aspect is a change in the *type* of ethnic politics that dominates the political arena. The Congress has typically blended coded appeals to ethnic identity with a range of other issues. The three successor parties, however, make open appeals to ethnicity the centerpiece of their political campaigns. It is this change in the dominant type of ethnic politics that I refer to as 'ethnification'. This section compares the manner in which the four parties invoked ethnicity in their 1998 election campaigns and traces the evolution in their use of ethnic categories since 1989.[4]

The Congress Party

On November 14, 1997, amid rumours of an impending parliamentary election, the Congress Party announced an ambitious series of program designed to revive itself in Uttar Pradesh. The inaugural event was a rally held in Allahabad at Anand Bhawan, Jawaharlal Nehru's ancestral home. I analyze here the manner in which the Congress invoked ethnic identity in the proceedings of the rally, which is an excellent example of vintage Congress strategy in Uttar Pradesh.[5] This analysis forms the background for comparison with the other parties which replaced the Congress in Uttar Pradesh.

The three speakers given star billing at the rally were the former Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee President N. D. Tiwari,[6] and Meira Kumar and Tariq Anwar, both national general secretaries of the party. In their speeches, all three speakers constructed the electorate not as a collection of ethnic blocks, but as an amorphous mass of individuals. They alternated between addressing this mass as a whole and addressing particular groups within it. Groups were defined, however, by employing a range of categories—ethnic and non-ethnic—and the lines of distinction were constantly redrawn so that no group, no matter how it was defined, assumed fixed boundaries. Meira Kumar's speech offers one illustration of these propositions. Kumar began by invoking a common sense of nationhood and depicting the Congress as a party of all individuals who made up the nation. Almost immediately, she launched

into a description of the nation as divided between rich and poor: 'He who has an abundance of grain also feels hungry and he who has no grain also feels hungry. If both feel hunger equally, then the grain should be shared equally. The difference between rich and poor should end.' A moment later, Kumar replaced income with caste as an organizing category: 'This society is not only divided into rich and poor, it is fragmented along caste lines...and until we end caste differences, we will not be able to free our people.' Caste was quickly followed by religion: 'These days parties are using slogans of religion. I want to ask them why are you inciting the people against each other—Hindus against Muslims, Sikhs against Hindus, this religion against that religion.' And the description of the nation as composed of a collection of religious groups gave way to the juxtaposition of Scheduled Castes against an undefined 'mainstream'. At the end of Kumar's speech, the political community had been classified in at least four different ways: (*a*) rich + poor; (*b*) as a collection of castes; (*c*) Hindu + Muslim + Sikh; and (*d*) Scheduled Castes + mainstream. Each classification was superimposed on a background that presumed a collection of individuals bound by some unifying tie. And while these individuals were successively viewed through a collection of frames, ethnic and non-ethnic, no single frame acquired dominant or permanent status.

The campaign issues raised by the Congress, similarly, did not privilege ethnic identity.[7] The only overt attempt during the election campaign to address ethnic groups were Sonia Gandhi's apologies for the storming of the Golden Temple and the demolition of the Babri Masjid, addressed specifically to Sikhs and Muslims. The other issues that were raised promised 'a secular state', 'all round development', 'national unity', 'law and order', and 'stability'—all promises targeted at an undifferentiated electorate.

Although ethnic identity was not overtly invoked in the political arena, it would however, be a mistake to assume that it was not employed at all. At the Congress revival rally, for example, the official positions of the three star speakers were not their sole qualifications. N. D. Tiwari was a Brahmin, Meira Kumar a Scheduled Caste, and Tariq Anwar a Muslim. Through its projection of leaders, Congress was in time honoured fashion sending out a coded message to the three ethnic categories that have been its traditional supporters in Uttar Pradesh.[8] Significantly, however, neither Meira Kumar nor the other leaders portrayed themselves as leaders of an imagined ethnic community or call explicitly for political action based on ethnic identity.

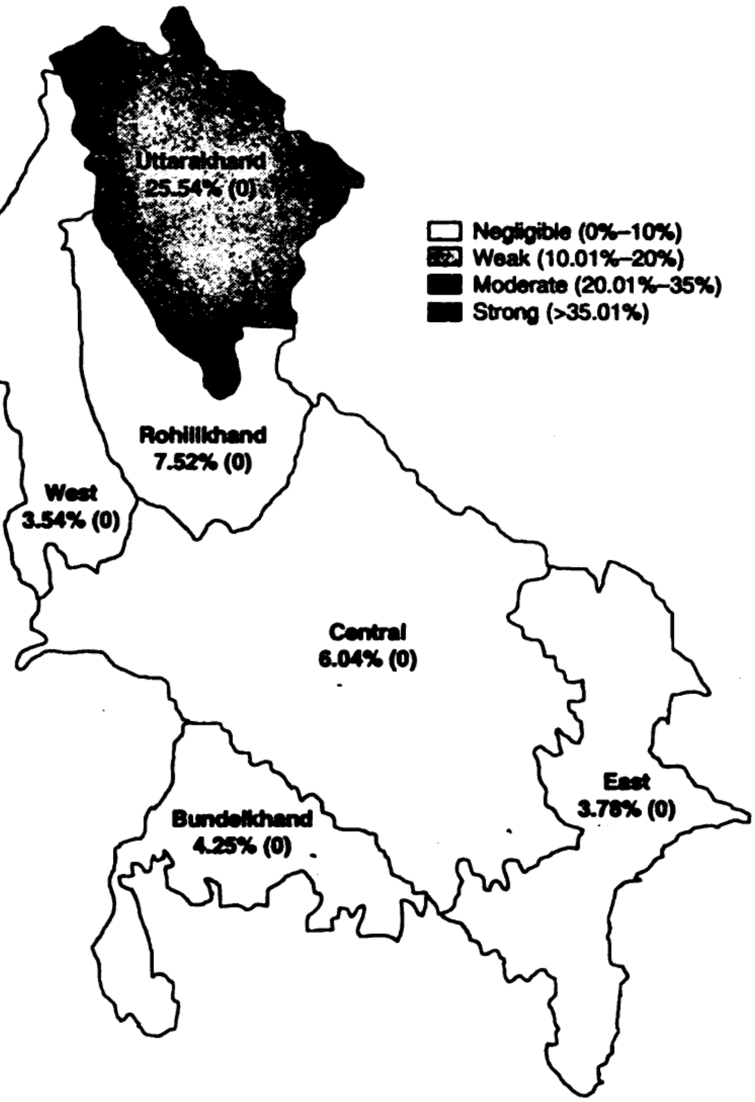
In addition to ethnic 'codes', the Congress has traditionally relied on ethnic arithmetic at the local level.[9] In each constituency, furthermore, the Congress candidate targets some categories and ignores others. However, differentiated ethnic coalitions are targeted across constituencies so that no single category is uniformly excluded and the Congress is not aligned with any particular ethnic bloc at the aggregate level. Members of particular ethnic categories at the local level, furthermore, have in the past been incorporated into the Congress through multi-ethnic factions.[10] Since they are brought in through vertical linkages with members of dominant groups, members of these newly mobilized ethnic categories have rarely assumed a cohesive political identity within the Congress.

By defining the electorate in multiple ways, avoiding overt references to ethnic identity in the political arena, and deflecting ethnic mobilization at the local level through multi-ethnic factions, the Congress strategy kept the boundaries between ethnic groups soft and prevented the formation of ethnic blocks at the aggregate levels of region and state. By 1998, however, although the strategy of the Congress remained unchanged, it no longer had any followers. The rally at Allahabad attracted less than a thousand people, most of whom were not supporters but passers-by attending to their own business. By 1998, the majority of the upper castes had left the Congress for the BJP; Muslims for the SP; and Scheduled Castes for the BSP.[11] Map 3.1 which summarizes the performance of the Congress across regions in Uttar Pradesh in the 1998 parliamentary election, illustrates the pervasiveness of the decline of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh. The only region in Uttar Pradesh where the Congress retains a foothold is in the four parliamentary constituencies of Uttarakhand. Even here, however, it was a runner up in only two constituencies.[12] With the 1998 election, the Congress has been decisively eliminated from politics in Uttar Pradesh and, with it, its unique brand of ethnic politics.

The Bharatiya Janata Party

The principal gainer in Uttar Pradesh at the cost of the Congress is the Bharatiya Janata Party, which has won a majority of seats in the parliamentary elections in Uttar Pradesh since 1991 (although not a majority of the vote). In the 1998 election, the BJP inched forward slightly compared to its position in the previous Lok Sabha election, increasing its votes from 33.44 percent to 35.8 percent (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1),

Map 3.1: INC Vote by Region



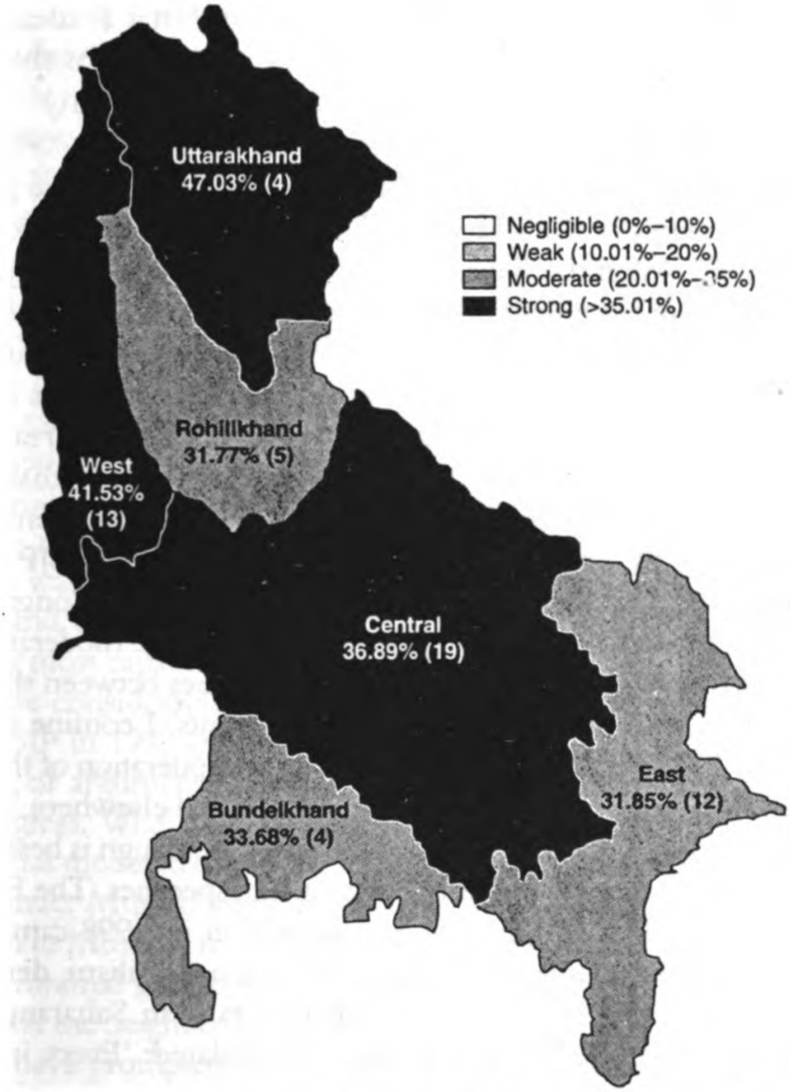
Source: Based on constituency-wise data posted on Election Commission of India website (http://www.eci.gov.in).

Lok Sabha Constituencies are grouped as follows: Uttarakhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 1–4); Rohillkhand: 10 constituencies (nos. 5–14); West: 14 constituencies (nos. 70, 73–85), Central: 33 constituencies (nos. 15–34, 47, 55, 57–58, 63–69, 71–72); East: 20 constituencies (nos. 35–46, 48–54, 56); Bundelkhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 59–62).

The figure in percentages refers to the aggregate vote percentage of the party in the region; the figure in parentheses refers to the number of seats it won.

Note that the regions vary greatly in the number of parliamentary constituencies they contain. While the vote percentage can be used to compare the performance of the party across regions, the number of seats won cannot be treated as a measure of comparative performance across regions unless the percentage of seats won is calculated first.

Map 3.2: BJP Vote by Region



Source: Based on constituency-wise data posted on Election Commission of India website (http://www.eci.gov.in).

Lok Sabha Constituencies are grouped as follows: Uttarakhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 1–4); Rohillkhand: 10 constituencies (nos. 5–14); West: 14 constituencies (nos. 70, 73–85), Central: 33 constituencies (nos. 15–34, 47, 55, 57–58, 63–69, 71–72); East: 20 constituencies (nos. 35–46, 48–54, 56); Bundelkhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 59–62).

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and its number of seats from 52 to 57. As Map 3.2 indicates, the BJP has acquired a substantial base of support throughout Uttar Pradesh. It is the leading party in five out of six regions in the state. In the sixth (Rohillkhand), it is equally balanced with the Samajwadi Party.

The rise of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh occurred between 1989 and 1991, when it marketed itself openly as a pro-Hindu party. The party's militancy in support of the imagined Hindu 'majority' continued until December 1992, when the Babri mosque at Ayodhya was destroyed by its supporters. Since the destruction of the mosque, the BJP has been progressively moderating its position, prompting speculation that it is slowly being transformed into a Congress 'clone'.[13] If the BJP is indeed becoming indistinguishable from the Congress, there is little reason to interpret post-Congress politics in Uttar Pradesh as a transformation of the party system: what we have in that case is simply the replacement of one centrist party by another. I argue here that although the BJP has in many ways attempted to mold itself in the image of the Congress, it remains fundamentally distinct. This section analyzes the moderation of the BJP in the 1998 election, outlining the similarities between the BJP and the Congress in order to emphasize their limits. I confine myself mainly to the 1998 election, since the story of the moderation of the BJP in the preceding years has been adequately recounted elsewhere.[14]

The moderation of the BJP in its 1998 election campaign is best illustrated through the silences in the BJP's campaign speeches. The BJP no longer aligned itself with the 'Hindu majority' in its 1998 campaign. Rather, it attempted to invoke a vaguely defined nationalism, denuded of its Hindu content. Speaking at an election rally in Saharanpur in western Uttar Pradesh, Atal Behari Vajpayee declared: 'Every inch of this land is dear to us. We have come to ask your support so that the dream of making Bharat great might be realized.'[15] In 1990, practically identical words, uttered by L. K. Advani during the BJP's Rath Yatra and preceded by descriptions of 'Bharat' as a holy land, immediately infused the word 'nation' with a Hindu content. In 1998, uttered by Vajpayee, who is widely regarded as a moderate, and separated from any overt association with Hindu religious or cultural symbols, they became a standard invocation of an inclusive nationalism, indistinguishable from that of the Congress. Like the Congress, the BJP addressed the 'nation' as a collection of individuals intermittently organized into groups (Dalits, farmers, Muslims). And like the Congress, it made a concerted effort to portray itself as an umbrella party, standing above all groups and sheltering the symbols and aspirations of each. As Vajpayee put it:

'We need to take care of everyone, take everyone along with us. When the Congress people come, they talk only of Gandhiji. When the BSP people come, they talk only of Ambedkar. We are the only ones who talk of Gandhi and Ambedkar, honor them both, think of both as important.'[16]

The campaign issues raised by the BJP were also indistinguishable from the issues traditionally raised by the Congress. Previous campaign issues associated specifically with the Hindu 'majority'—the construction of the temple at Ayodhya, protection of the cow, and Article 370—were duly noted in the election manifesto but ignored in the election campaign.[17] The Ram temple was mentioned in Ayodhya itself, where L. K. Advani promised that the BJP would not overlook 'the popular sentiments for the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya'.[18] Barring isolated exceptions, however, the BJP's campaign focused on the issues of stability, good governance, and capable leadership, designed to appeal to the nation as a whole rather than Hindus in particular. Political instability was portrayed as the single most important threat facing the country; and the BJP under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee as the party most capable of providing stability.[19]

The considerable similarities outlined here between the strategy of the BJP in 1998 and the traditional strategy of the Congress form the basis of arguments describing the BJP as an emerging 'clone' of the Congress. What such arguments miss, however, is that although the BJP has moderated its pro-Hindu rhetoric, it has made no parallel effort to attract Muslim support. A close look at the assurances of the BJP given to Muslims in the 1998 campaign, reveal that they contain mainly the minimal guarantees of security that the BJP has always extended, even at the height of its pro-Hindu rhetoric in 1991.[20] Yet, such guarantees have prompted a spate of newspaper articles arguing that 'clearly the BJP has changed track [sic] and is trying to shed its earlier militant Hindutva image as it desperately seeks to woo the crucial Muslim vote, a decisive factor in at least 23 Uttar Pradesh constituencies.'[21] Such an assessment ignores the fact that what has changed in the BJP's attitude towards Muslims between 1991 and 1998 is simply that the BJP no longer identifies Muslims as a target for hostility. While Muslims are no longer the BJP's target enemies, it, however, does not follow that they are the BJP's target voters.

A look at the number of tickets given to Muslims in Uttar Pradesh by the BJP offers persuasive evidence that the party is not seeking Muslim votes. Since 1989, the BJP has given at most one ticket to a Muslim candidate in the 1991, 1993, and 1996 assembly elections.[22] In all other elections (the 1989 parliamentary election, the 1991 parliamentary

election, and the 1996 parliamentary election), not a single BJP ticket was allotted to a Muslim candidate. In the 1998 parliamentary election, true to the same pattern, only one ticket was given to a Muslim candidate.[23] It is political common sense in Uttar Pradesh that in order to attract the votes of any major ethnic category, a political party must nominate at least some candidates from that category. A party that habitually gives only one ticket to a Muslim candidate is not a party 'desperately seek[ing] to woo the crucial Muslim vote'. Rather, it is a party that has chosen to stake its electoral future only on Hindus, uniformly excluding Muslims from its effective electorate. As a party that continues to maintain the hard line it had drawn earlier in the decade between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority and places itself squarely on the Hindu side, it cannot be said to be a centrist party in the Congress mold.

How, then, should we interpret the limited overtures that the BJP has been making to Muslims, and the toning down of its pro-Hindu rhetoric? If the BJP is not interested in obtaining Muslim votes, then why make overtures to Muslims at all? These assurances are best interpreted as a signal to Hindu voters, themselves divided over the treatment of Muslims in India, and to potential alliance partners who might not have found an alliance with an anti-Muslim party palatable or politically profitable.

The principal targets of the BJP's strategy in Uttar Pradesh since 1993 seem not to have been Muslims but the backward castes and Scheduled Castes. As indicated earlier, the BJP's core group of voters comes from among the upper castes, the overwhelming majority of whom had massed behind the BJP by 1996.[24] Following the Ram temple movement, the BJP had built some support among backward and Scheduled Castes, but it remained considerably weaker among both these categories. Only 32.7 percent of backward castes voted for the BJP in the 1996 elections and only 8.6 percent of the Scheduled Castes.[25] In the ethnically heterogeneous constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, even the en masse support of the upper castes is typically not sufficient to produce a victory. In a four way competition, for example, the minimum threshold of votes that any one party needs to win is slightly over one-fourth of the total votes cast. In a three way competition, the votes must exceed at least one-third of the total votes cast. In a two way competition, the votes must exceed one-half. Upper castes constitute approximately one-fifth of the electorate of the state as a whole and do not exceed this proportion in most constituencies in Uttar Pradesh.[26] Even with the support of the majority of upper castes, a considerable additional margin of votes is needed in order to win. The Congress had constructed wide

winning margins in Uttar Pradesh by building an electoral coalition out of both Hindus and Muslims. So far, the BJP is attempting to replace the shortfall created by its alienation of the Muslim vote by pursuing the support of backward castes and Scheduled Castes. A forthright remark by one BJP candidate in the 1996 assembly election illustrates this logic. When asked how much support he had obtained from backward castes in his constituency, he replied: 'You can assume that I have gained as much support from the backward castes in my constituency as I have lost from Muslims. What more can I say?'[27]

The BJP has attempted to court backward castes in Uttar Pradesh mainly by increasing the representation of members of these categories in its candidate lists and Cabinets. However, resistance from its upper caste core has meant that such increases so far have been modest: backward caste MLAs belonging to the BJP jumped from a plateau of 16 percent between 1989 and 1993 to 21 percent in 1996; while backward caste ministers in the BJP council of ministers jumped from 21 percent in 1991 to 27 percent in 1997.[28] It attempted to boost its credibility among Scheduled Castes in particular through its support of BSP-led governments in 1995 and 1997. So far, however, it has chosen not to utilize caste explicitly as an organizing category that further subdivides the Hindu 'majority'. Nor has it attempted to weld caste categories together into a homogeneous Hindu 'majority' as it did earlier in the decade. This strategy appears to have enabled the BJP to preserve its base but not to expand it: its share of the vote remained at a plateau of approximately one-third of the votes over the five parliamentary and assembly elections held in Uttar Pradesh between 1991 and 1998. While one-third of the vote has enabled it to win majority of the parliamentary constituencies, it has not been able to produce a governing majority in the state assembly elections.

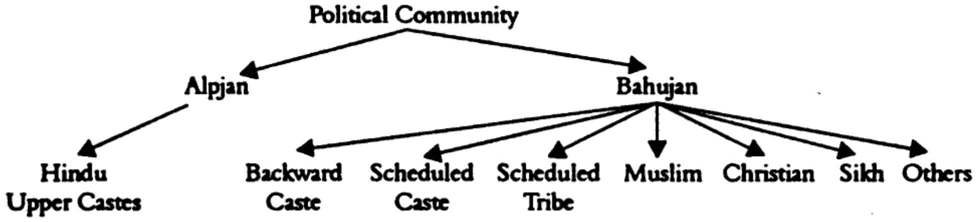
In order to obtain a winning margin in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP must either increase its support base among members of the backward and Scheduled Castes or begin to court the support of Muslims. So far, it has chosen the first. Strategies proposed by BJP leaders to broaden their base among backward and Scheduled Castes include two main options: the first is a more substantial incorporation of backward castes into the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP is locked in fierce competition for the support of backward castes with the SP and BSP, both of which are pursuing backward castes by explicitly promising them a share in power in proportion to their population. Given the existing terms of the electoral debate, the BJP is likely to be able to wean away backward castes and Scheduled Castes from the SP and BSP only by 'outbidding' them

in promises of increased representation. Several BJP leaders, including K. N. Govindacharya, one of the general secretaries of the party, have suggested that the BJP increase its efforts to give political representation to backward castes. However, such proposals continue to meet with significant resistance within the party. The second option is to change the terms of the debate and revert to the aggressive espousal of Hindu nationalism that initially brought the BJP to power. This strategy seemed to have found little favor within the party in the 1998 election, but has periodically resurfaced in the history of the BJP and should not be ruled out from the realm of possibility.

The Bahujan Samaj Party

Where the BJP draws a line between the Muslim minority and Hindu majority, the Bahujan Samaj Party draws a cross-cutting line between a different kind of minority (*alpjan*) and majority (*bahujan*). The minority, or 'alpjan', in the BSP's formulation, consists of the three Hindu upper castes. The majority, or 'bahujan', consists of backward castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs, or in other words, 'all those not included in the three Hindu upper castes'.[29] The cleavage between caste Hindus and the rest of society is for the BSP the primary cleavage dividing the political community. Figure 3.2 summarizes the BSP's categorization of the political community.

Figure 3.2: BSP's Categorization of the Political Community



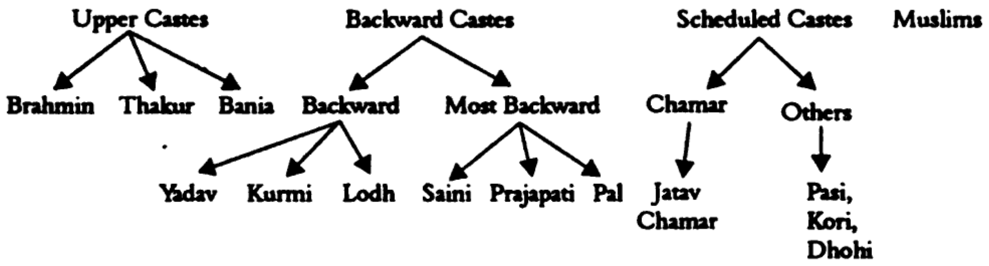
The party describes the *bahujan samaj* (majority of the people), which it estimates to form 85 percent of the population, as a community of all those 'humiliated' by the Hindu upper castes. The belief that the upper castes are an oppressive minority ruling over an oppressed majority is the keystone of the BSP's ideology.

Like the BJP, the BSP is fundamentally different from the Congress. For the BSP, the political community is constituted by groups, not individuals. These groups have fixed, not fluctuating boundaries. And whereas the Congress defines groups by several ascriptive and non-ascriptive

criteria, the BSP treats ascriptive identity as the sole classifying criterion. For example, although there is a significant overlap between those who are poor and those whom the BSP includes within the *bahujan samaj*, the party rarely speaks of the undifferentiated poor. Rather, it treats poverty as an attribute associated with certain ethnic categories but not an organizing category in itself.

Although the BSP treats the boundaries *between* the alpjan and bahujan and their constituent categories as fixed, the party has progressively recognized subdivisions *within* each of these categories. In 1984, for example, when the BSP was founded, it treated the backward castes as listed in the Mandal Commission Report as a single undifferentiated category. By 1996, however, the party had begun to draw distinctions between the 'backward' castes and the 'most backward' castes. Both categories were in turn subdivided into a collection of component castes. Figure 3.3 summarizes those subdivisions within categories in Uttar Pradesh which the BSP has explicitly acknowledged so far. Scheduled Tribes, Sikhs, and Christians are not included here since they do not form any significant proportion of the population of Uttar Pradesh.

Figure 3.3: Subdivisions within Political Categories



The term 'most backward castes' refers in the BSP's categorization not to an official classification, but to all those among the backward castes who are not Yadavs, Kurmis, or Lodhs. Muslims have so far been treated by the BSP as a single category. There is nothing in the logic of the BSP's position, however, that would prevent it from recognizing further subdivisions. The BSP's method of mobilization, as I discuss further, hinges on the identification and activation of ethnic subdivisions. It is important to point out, however, that the BSP continues to employ only ascriptive criteria in its identification of subdivisions within each main category. Other possible means of differentiating within ethnic categories (class, gender, occupation, sector) are not acknowledged as relevant.

The BSP has consistently appealed to its target ethnic categories with a single point programme: proportional representation for every ethnic category in the government, bureaucracy, and other state institutions. 'Political power', according to Kanshi Ram, the BSP's founder, 'is the master key with which you can open any lock, whether it is social, economic, educational or cultural....'[30] Accordingly, the BSP devotes most of its election campaigns to detailing the opportunities it makes available to each ethnic category to obtain a share in government. The party does not print election manifestoes. Instead, it treats its candidate list as its manifesto, publicizing the ethnic profile of its candidates as proof of its commitment to giving each ethnic category its due share in power. The following extract from a speech by BSP leader Mayawati illustrates the BSP's use of this strategy during the 1998 election:[31]

> There are 18 seats in this state reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates. But the BSP has given 21 seats to Scheduled Castes, three more than the 18 seats reserved for them by the constitution. Among these 21 seats, we have given five to the Pasi community, one to the Dhobi community, one to the Kori community, one to the Khatik community, and 13 seats to the Chamar community.
>
> I want to tell my Muslim brothers also that this time the BSP has given the single largest number of seats in Uttar Pradesh to Muslim candidates. We allotted these seats to Muslims where the Muslim Samaj had at least 200,000 votes. In all these constituencies, the votes of the Dalit Shoshit Samaj [literally translated as the 'oppressed' people; this is in practice a term synonymous with Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh] will be cast for these candidates in any case. If in all these constituencies the 200,000 Muslim votes come to us as well, then I can assure you that all of the 14 candidates from the Muslim community will become members of parliament.
>
> I want to tell my Backward Caste brothers that your population in Uttar Pradesh is also very large. The Bahujan Samaj Party has given the slogan: 'Jiski Jitni Sankhya Bhaari, Uski Utni Bhagyadari.' [Each group will get a share in power equal to its proportion in the population.] Keeping this in mind, since the population of the backward castes is greater than all other castes in Uttar Pradesh, we have given them 35 seats. My Saini brothers will be happy to hear that in the neighboring seat of Muzaffarnagar, we have given the seat to Rajaram Saini.... In addition, we have also given opportunities to other communities related to the Sainis: the Maurya community, the Shakya community, the Kashyap community, and the Kushwaha community in other parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Mayawati's speech also illustrates the main target constituencies of the BSP in the 1998 election. Significantly, Scheduled Castes were not the BSP's primary targets in this election. By 1996, the majority of Scheduled Castes had already massed behind the BSP, and Mayawati's remark that 'the votes of the Dalit Shoshit Samaj will be cast for Muslims "in any case"' indicates that the BSP was relatively confident in its ability to retain Scheduled Caste votes. Whereas in the 1996 assembly election, Scheduled Castes were allotted the greatest share of BSP tickets (30 percent), their share dropped to 25 percent in the 1998 parliamentary election.[32] The primary target of the BSP in this election were the Backward Castes: 41 percent of the tickets in these elections were given to backward castes, an increase of more than 10 percent from the 1996 assembly election. Among the backward castes, the BSP favored the 'most backward castes', who obtained 66 percent of the tickets given to backward castes. In addition, the BSP continued to seek the support of Muslims: it allotted Muslims roughly the same percentage of tickets (16 percent) that it had in the 1996 assembly election and in addition circulated a separate booklet describing the BSP's commitment to Muslim interests.

Finally, the BSP increased its efforts to reach out to upper castes, which it had done in the 1996 parliamentary election. Prior to the 1996 parliamentary election, the BSP mobilized the bahujan by polarizing the electorate against the upper castes. The promise of political representation was packaged within a narrative of the collective humiliation of the bahujan samaj at the hands of upper caste Hindus. Obtaining political power, in the early history of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh, was described mainly as a means of avenging humiliation by displacing the upper castes from their superior position. Until as late as 1993, when the BSP first surged to power in Uttar Pradesh with an alliance with the Samajwadi Party, the then BSP State President, Raj Bahadur, directed his voters not to vote for upper castes and to make sure that upper caste candidates, even those put up by its alliance partner, were defeated.[33] In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, however, the BSP allotted tickets to upper caste candidates in Uttar Pradesh for the first time. In the 1996 Vidhan Sabha election, approximately 17 percent of BSP tickets went to upper caste candidates.[34] And in 1998, the BSP not only allotted the same percentage of tickets to upper-caste candidates, but made the induction of upper castes into the BSP a major election issue. Lauding the upper castes for their 'change of heart', Mayawati declared the BSP to be a party of the *sarvasamaj* (all people), and not simply the bahujan samaj in her election speeches.[35]

It is tempting to interpret the BSP's attempt to incorporate upper castes, like the moderation of the BJP, as the transformation of the party into a benign 'catch-all' party identical to the Congress.[36] Such an interpretation, however, is premature and misleading. It is premature because the incorporation of upper castes has aroused fierce resistance among the core of Scheduled Caste workers in the party, who resent being forced to work for an upper caste candidate, and it is not yet clear to what extent it is likely to endure.[37] In an interview in March 1997, Kanshi Ram freely admitted that he had difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of his workers in the induction of upper caste candidates. In Uttar Pradesh, according to him, the party organization was disciplined enough to accept his directive. However, he pointed out that he could not do the same thing in any other state.[38] Even in Uttar Pradesh, however, he finally appeared to back down in the face of this resistance, and announced before the 1998 election that the BSP would no longer open its doors to upper castes.[39] The announcement was later denied by Mayawati on his behalf. While Mayawati's intervention may have resulted in the reappearance of upper caste candidates in the party's candidate list, the events preceding it indicate that the incorporation of upper castes into the party remains a fragile process, vulnerable to summary reversal.

The method through which the BSP incorporates upper castes, furthermore, is distinct from that of the Congress. The BSP not only allots tickets to upper caste candidates as representatives of a statewide ethnic block, it also relies on highly segmented methods of building support, so that members of each ethnic category are encouraged to approach only others of their own kind but not to build cross-ethnic support. As one upper caste candidate in Uttar Pradesh, campaigning only with upper caste workers, described the BSP's method: 'The party has advised me that the Scheduled Castes will collect the vote of the Scheduled Castes and we higher castes will collect the votes of the higher castes. Our strategy is that our SC brothers are here to convince SCs, Yadavs to convince Yadavs, and Kurmis to convince Kurmis.'[40] The BSP encourages members of each category to maintain separate corporate identities, while at the same time it attempts to build coalitions between them. By incorporating upper castes, therefore, all the BSP does is to effectively abolish the primary distinction that it draws between upper castes and the rest. However, upper castes continue to be encased within the hard ethnic boundaries that separate members of each ethnic category from others.

Why has the BSP begun to supplement its traditional vote base with upper caste votes in spite of serious internal resistance? The answer lies once again in the heterogeneous composition of Uttar Pradesh's electoral constituencies. The Scheduled Castes, who form the core of BSP support, are not strong enough in any constituency to ensure its victory.[41] The central dilemma for the BSP, as for every other party in Uttar Pradesh, therefore, has been to find ways of supplementing its core vote sufficiently to permit it to win electoral victories. Until 1993, the BSP attempted to find its coveted margin by excluding upper castes and mobilizing only its ideologically favored constituencies: Muslims and backward castes. However, since the BSP's first flirtation with the BJP in Uttar Pradesh in 1995, its credibility among Muslims has been suspect. In 1996, it managed to attract a negligible 4.7 percent of the Muslim vote.[42] In the 1998 election, given that the BSP had once more collaborated with the BJP in forming a government, its prospects of improving its performance among Muslims were doubtful. Backward castes have been somewhat more responsive to the BSP's appeal. However, the BSP faces fierce competition for the support of backward castes with the SP and BJP and was unlikely, in a single election, to obtain the strong support from backward castes that might have guaranteed a winning margin.

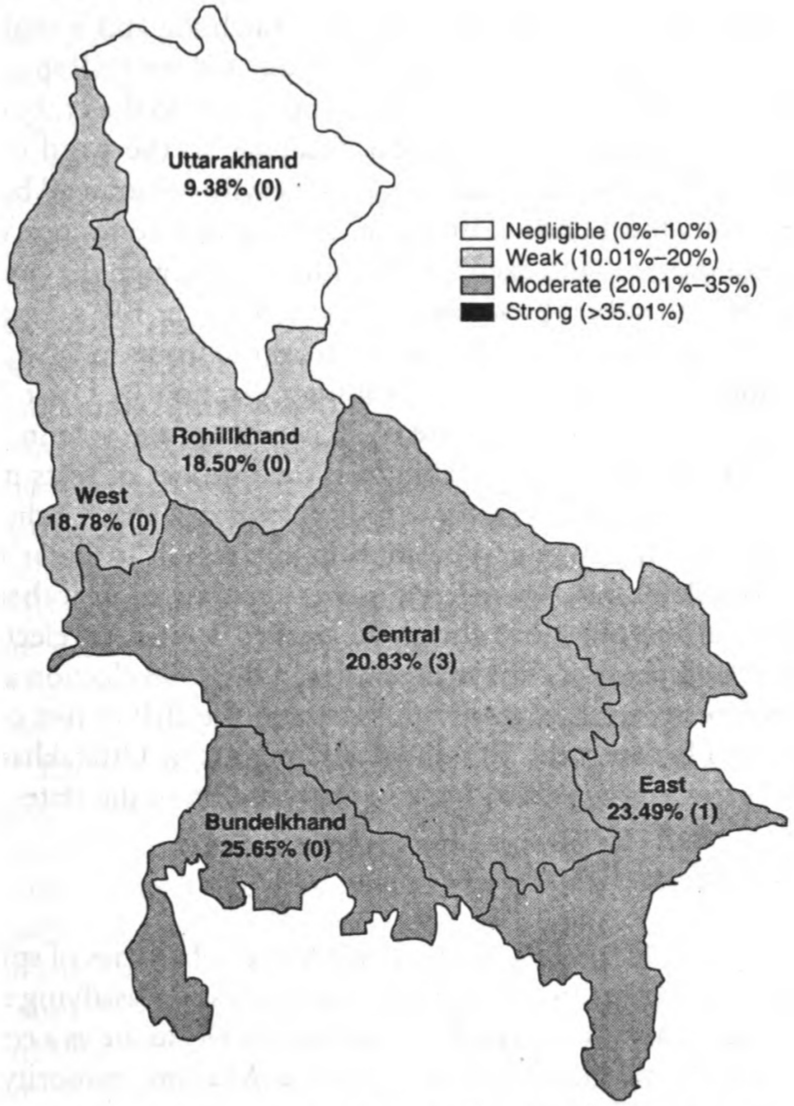
The BSP, therefore, faced two main options before the 1998 election to boost its chances of winning: an alliance with the Samajwadi Party which would have allowed both parties to pool their support; or an attempt to court the party's ideological enemies—the upper castes. Although there were clear mutual gains for both sides in an alliance between the BSP and the Samajwadi Party, the alliance foundered on two rocks: personal animosity between Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav, the leader of the Samajwadi Party, and, more importantly, a concern for relative rather than mutual gains. As the subsequent discussion on the Samajwadi Party will show, both the BSP and the SP are locked in competition for the same constituencies. Both have entrenched support among a core group of voters (Scheduled Castes in the case of the BSP and Yadavs and Muslims in the case of the SP) and are in competition for the floating vote of the backward castes that could boost either party to a winning position. Mayawati's actions suggest that the gains in the number of seats that the BSP might have won through an alliance weighed less than the cost of boosting the credibility of the Samajwadi Party among their common target constituencies.[43] Once it had refused to consider the option of an alliance, the BSP had no option left but to pursue votes on all fronts, including the upper castes.

Several observers argue that the explanation for why the BSP did not ally with the SP in the 1998 election goes deeper than the calculus of gains and losses. It lies, according to this argument, in a pattern of land ownership and cultivation which pits Scheduled Castes against sections of the backward castes, especially Yadavs and Kurmis. Proponents of this argument assert that upper castes in Uttar Pradesh are largely absentee landlords who no longer come directly into contact with the Scheduled Castes. Instead, Yadavs and Kurmis, who emerged as land owners after the land reforms, have replaced upper castes as the main 'tormentors' of the Scheduled Castes.[44]

This argument ignores, however, that the relationship of Scheduled Castes with upper castes in much of Uttar Pradesh is also fraught with tension. In a total of 54 incidents of caste violence reported in the first three months of the SP–BSP government in 1993–1994, for example, backward castes and Scheduled Castes clashed with each other in 21, but upper castes and Scheduled Castes also clashed with each other in 13.[45] Such polarization in caste relations between Scheduled Castes and upper castes did not prevent the BSP from seeking a political alliance with the upper castes. There is no reason, therefore, to assume that it poses an insurmountable obstacle to a political rapprochement between the Scheduled Castes and the backward castes.

In light of the argument so far, one further question needs to be addressed: if the electoral incentives of heterogeneous constituencies forced the BSP to abolish the primary distinction between the bahujan samaj and upper caste Hindus, why did similar incentives not lead the BJP to erase the distinction between Hindus and Muslims in its own electoral strategy? The answer is that the BJP has so far faced weaker incentives and stronger constraints in its incorporation of Muslims than the BSP has in its incorporation of upper castes. Prior to the 1998 election, the BJP had already acquired the support of a third of the backward castes. It had also boosted its image among Scheduled Castes through its support of the BSP governments. The BJP, therefore, approached the 1998 election with a larger electoral coalition than the BSP and thus had weaker incentives to appeal to Muslim voters. At the same time, the BJP faces stronger ideological constraints against the incorporation of Muslims than the BSP does against the incorporation of upper castes. The BSP is a highly centralized party, whose principal ideologue, Kanshi Ram, also remains its leader. It was born out of BAMCEF, an organization of government employees trained by Kanshi Ram and his close associates, which provided the early cadre base of the

Map 3.3: BSP Vote by Region



Source: Based on constituency-wise data posted on Election Commission of India website (http://www.eci.gov.in).

Lok Sabha Constituencies are grouped as follows: Uttarakhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 1–4); Rohillkhand: 10 constituencies (nos. 5–14); West: 14 constituencies (nos. 70, 73–85), Central: 33 constituencies (nos. 15–34, 47, 55, 57–58, 63–69, 71–72); East: 20 constituencies (nos. 35–46, 48–54, 56); Bundelkhand: 4 constituencies (nos. 59–62).

The figure in percentages refers to the aggregate vote percentage of the party in the region; the figure in parentheses refers to the number of seats it won.

Note that the regions vary greatly in the number of parliamentary constituencies they contain. While the vote percentage can be used to compare the performance of the party across regions, the number of seats won cannot be treated as a measure of comparative performance across regions unless the percentage of seats won is calculated first.

party. As long as it continued to be associated with the BSP, BAMCEF might have functioned as an ideological watchdog and a challenge to Kanshi Ram's authority. However, BAMCEF and the BSP split in 1985. With its exit, there remains emotional opposition to the entry of upper castes but no significant ideological challenge to the word of Kanshi Ram. The BJP, however, continues to be heavily constrained by its relationship with the Hindu nationalist RSS, which continues to be its ideological overseer and exercises its influence through the presence of full-time RSS members (*pracharaks*) in key nodes of the BJP's organization.

Even though it attempted to court votes on all fronts in 1998, the BSP was unable to elevate itself to a winning position in Uttar Pradesh. Although it retained a basic share of 20 percent of the vote in the 1998 election (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1), the number of seats it won in Uttar Pradesh dropped from six to four. A look at Map 3.3 indicates that the BSP is not in a winning position in any region in Uttar Pradesh. Even in Bundelkhand, where it has more support than any other region, it is short of the one-third threshold needed to win an election in a three-way competition. The main battles in the 1998 election appear to have been between the Samajwadi Party and the BJP in five out of six regions, and between the BJP and the Congress in Uttarakhand, with the BSP emerging as a third force in every region in the state.

The Samajwadi Party

The Samajwadi Party (SP), formed in 1992 out of a series of splits from the Janata Dal, employs two principal categories in classifying the electorate: religion and caste. The SP organizes the electorate as a composite of two insular religious 'communities': a Muslim 'minority' and a Hindu 'majority'. Both the Muslim 'minority' and the Hindu 'majority' are then further disaggregated by caste. The Samajwadi Party gives more emphasis than the BJP and the BSP on non-ethnic categories, describing itself also as a party of farmers, of the poor, of the young, or of rural India. However, where they are not subordinated to ethnic categories, these categories are given only secondary emphasis.

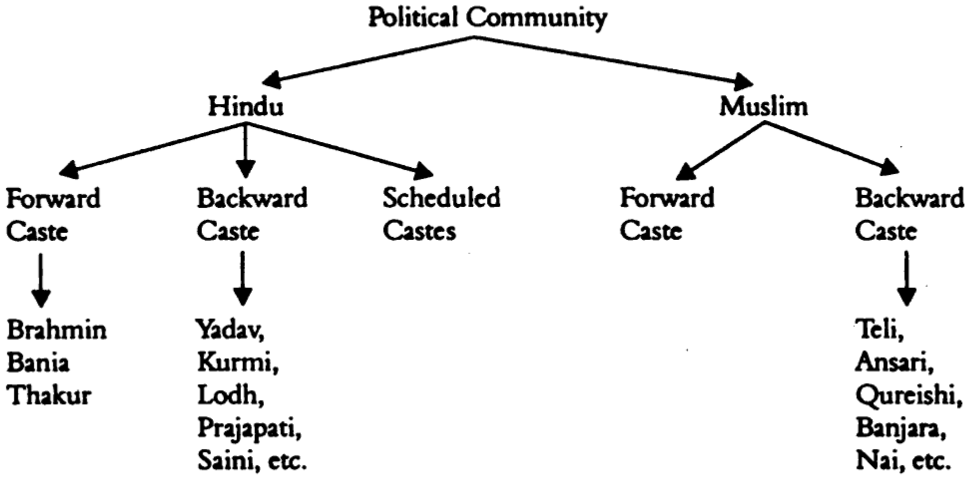
Let me illustrate first the use of religious identity as the primary classification employed by the SP. At an election rally in Saharanpur during the 1998 election campaign, an SP leader offered the following description of the nation: 'Hindustan is a very great land. Our Hindu brothers are our elder brothers. We Muslims are the younger brothers. It is all right with us if they rule this country, in fact we want them to rule. We are not worried. But our elder brothers should fulfill their

duty. We are in need of a Hindu brother like Mulayam Singh Yadav who gives us the care due to a younger brother.'[46] The nation in this description is composed of two corporate units—Hindu and Muslim. Both Hindus and Muslims are treated as internally homogeneous communities, reducible in effect to single individuals: 'the Hindu' and 'the Muslim'. The divide between 'the Hindu' and 'the Muslim', furthermore, is treated as the primary cleavage in society eclipsing all other differences. Speaking later at the same rally, Mulayam Singh Yadav repeatedly invoked the same image. Each campaign issue was raised as a matter to be evaluated by both communities acting cohesively, with Yadav positioning himself as an arbiter between two separate and internally homogeneous set of interests. Speaking on the demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya, he declared: 'I want to tell my Muslim brothers that by protecting one mosque, we have done them no favor. This is a matter of national unity. ... But when bullets were fired, our Hindu brothers got angry.' He put the issue of the uniform civil code in the same way: 'What is the meaning of a uniform civil code? The Muslim has no problem marrying his uncle's daughter, his first cousin. Now, my Hindu brother, tell me, are you ready to marry your first cousin?' There was no acknowledgment in Yadav's rhetoric of differences of opinion within the two groups, or of clusters of opinion on the uniform civil code cross-cutting the religious divide. Even the issue of poverty and hunger were presented as ethnically specific, separately and individually experienced by the two communities: 'When it is Id, is there, in the homes of all my Muslim brothers 10–15 kilos of ghee in their houses, 20–25 kilos of sugar, arrangements for new clothes for the children? Now Holi is about to come. Tell me, my Hindu brothers, do you have 10–15 kilos of ghee ready in your house? 20–25 kilos of sugar? ...Unless our Hindus and Muslims have enough resources to celebrate Id and Holi properly, stability will not come to India.'

While maintaining the primary division between 'the Hindu' and 'the Muslim', the Samajwadi Party frequently switches its attention to caste divisions among both. The SP initially highlighted only aggregate caste divisions among Hindus 'forward castes', 'backward castes' and Scheduled Castes. By 1998, however, it had begun to press deeper into caste subdivisions within the backward castes among both Hindus and Muslims, and to a lesser extent, the Hindu 'forward' castes. Figure 3.4 summarizes the SP's classification of the political community in 1998.

Figure 3.4 combines elements of both the BJP and the BSP's schemes for classifying the electorate: the BJP also maintains a clear line between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority, although it does not, like

Figure 3.4: SP's Classification of the Political Community.



the SP, explicitly acknowledge subdivisions among either Hindus or Muslims. The BSP would not recognize the line between Hindus and Muslims as the primary division defining the political community. However, the SP's description of both Hindus and Muslims as a collection of aggregate caste categories that are in themselves a collection of individual castes is in fact an attempt to emulate the strategy of the BSP.

The roots of the more detailed picture of caste divisions can be traced to a major backward classes rally organized by the Samajwadi Party in Lucknow in December 1996.[47] Attended by every significant leader of the party and intended as the first of a series of training programmes to prepare party workers for the next election, the rally was a major event for the Samajwadi Party. The rally grounds were plastered with banners offering support to the SP on behalf of individual castes that form hardly 1 or 2 percent of the population of Uttar Pradesh: the All-India Pal Mahasabha, the National Yuva Prajapati Samaj, and the All-India Kashyap–Nishad–Bind Ekta Mahasangh. The banners illustrated two important aspects of the SP's strategy: first, it relied entirely on ascriptive classifications. Although the conference was nominally for the 'backward classes', there was not a single banner speaking for a class-based or other non-ethnic group.[48] Second, the SP, like the BSP, sought to build support not by attempting to weld individual castes together into a common cultural community, but by stitching discrete communities into a coalition with the common interest of achieving political power.

In the 1998 election, the Samajwadi Party targeted all Muslims, defined as a cohesive religious minority, and all backward castes, Hindus, and Muslims. Muslims were courted by purposefully highlighting

the dangers posed to Muslims by the BJP and describing the SP as the only party committed to protecting the lives and security of Muslims. Mulayam Singh Yadav frequently invoked the violence that followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid in his 1998 campaign:

> The BJP says we will wipe out hunger. Who will wipe out hunger? Those who by destroying the mosque on December 6, 1992, laid waste all of Hindustan? Surat, Bombay, Bhopal, Kanpur were burning; there were riots, murders, and our daughters were stripped naked and made to dance on shards of broken glass and told if they did not dance then we will shoot your family. And our poor daughters paid with their honor so that their families would be protected...and then they shot their families in front of them.[49]

Mulayam Singh's deliberately melodramatic description of the riots reveals as much about the SP's attempt to keep the threat of the BJP alive as about the actual danger posed to Muslims by the BJP. The BJP's Hindu communalism has benefited the SP by allowing it to consolidate its support among the Muslims. As long as the BJP threat continues to exist or can be depicted to exist, the SP can retain its support among Muslims through the relatively low cost strategy of promising protection.

The SP courted backward castes by demanding affirmative action for backward castes in representative institutions and mobilizing them against the threat to their political position posed by the proposal to introduce 33 percent reservations in parliament for women. Speaking at the backward caste rally cited, SP leader Beni Prasad Verma pointed out:

> Attempts to divide us continue, now in the form of women's reservations. If there are women here, please do not take offense, the idea is correct in principle. But if a proposal of this type is implemented, then our position will slip further....In our state, hardly 15 percent of the women are literate. And from among the backward castes, only 1-2 percent women are literate. So when these 33 percent reservations are implemented, which women are going to go to parliament? Not the women from among this 54 percent of the population....We say, first give reservations to backwards, and then from this reservation, give 33 percent to women in parliament, we have no problem.[50]

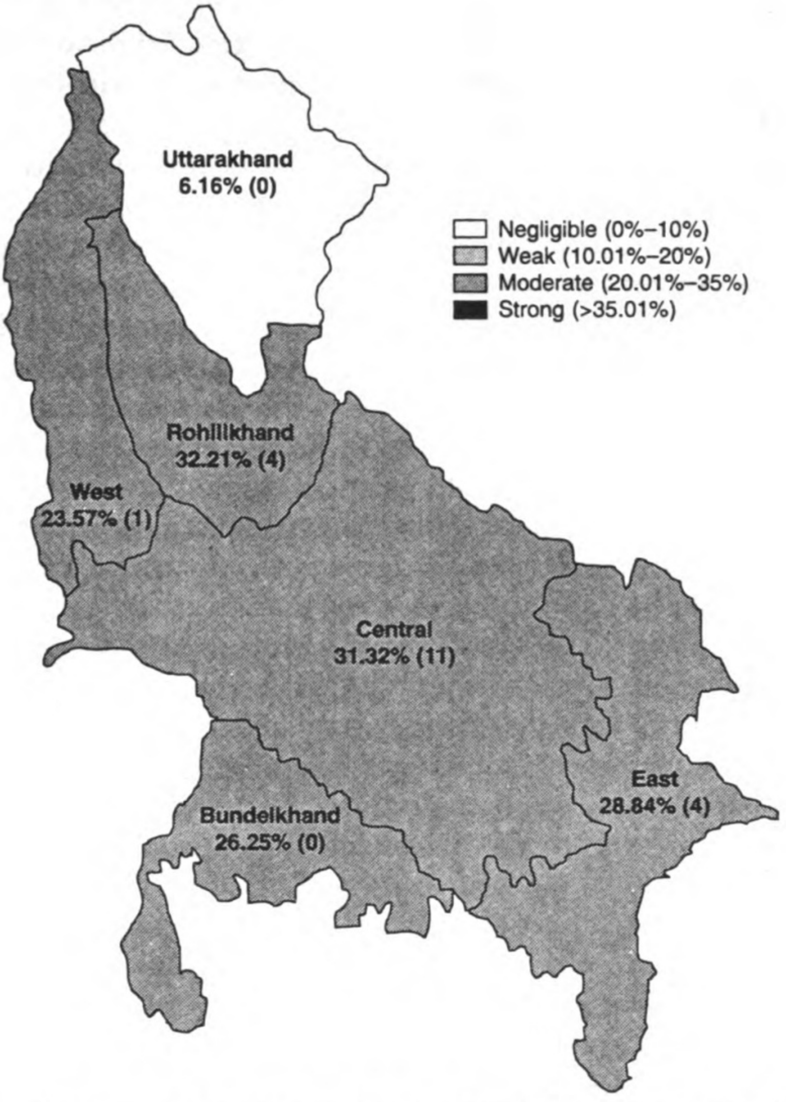
In particular, the SP made a special effort to reach out to the lower sections of the backward castes. Mulayam Singh Yadav refuted the

frequently made argument that his government had worked for the benefit of Yadavs more than other OBCs, and promised to address what he described as the legitimate concerns of the more deprived sections of the backward castes, though he refrained from identifying them as a separate political bloc as the BSP has begun to do.[51]

Finally, the SP also made an effort to recruit support from among the 'forward' castes. This initiative was not new to the 1998 election. Even in the 1993 election, when the SP–BSP alliance had come to power by drawing a sharp line between the 'forwards', composed of the Hindu upper castes, and the 'backwards', composed of the backward castes, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims, the SP had been more conciliatory towards the upper castes than the BSP. In the 1996 assembly election, the SP had made a bid to attract upper caste support by allotting approximately 21 percent of its tickets to upper caste candidates.[52] In 1998, it continued this effort, increasing the percentage of tickets allotted to upper castes slightly to 25 percent and openly appealing for upper caste support in its 1998 campaign.[53]

Significantly, the one category excluded from the SP's appeal was the Scheduled Caste. The issues raised by the SP during its mobilization campaigns in fact aligned it with other caste categories against Scheduled Castes. Literature distributed at the backward caste rally, far from courting Scheduled Caste support, demanded parity in development schemes for backward castes with schemes that already existed for the Scheduled Castes. During the 1998 election campaign, Mulayam Singh accused Scheduled Castes of misusing the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act to humiliate members of other caste categories.[54] Finally, Yadav called upon Muslims, upper castes and backward castes to come together to defeat the BSP. Speaking in Saharanpur, from where Kanshi Ram stood for election, he declared: 'They have come here after having done a survey that taught them to fight where there are no Yadavs. In Phulpur the Yadavs defeated them. Here, brothers, there are no Yadavs. But there are our Muslim brothers, our Rajput brothers, our Brahmin brothers. Make sure that such people lose their deposits.'[55] It is not surprising that Mulayam Singh Yadav sought the defeat of Kanshi Ram, this time an opposing candidate, in the 1998 election. What is significant, however, is that Yadav did not seek Kanshi Ram's defeat by attempting to demonstrate his own commitment to Scheduled Caste interests, but by mobilizing a coalition of other caste categories against Scheduled Castes.

Map 3.4: SP Vote by Region



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The figure in percentages refers to the aggregate vote percentage of the party in the region; the figure in parentheses refers to the number of seats it won.

Note that the regions vary greatly in the number of parliamentary constituencies they contain. While the vote percentage can be used to compare the performance of the party across regions, the number of seats won cannot be treated as a measure of comparative performance across regions unless the percentage of seats won is calculated first.

The core base of support for the Samajwadi Party comes from Muslims and Yadavs.[56] In order to obtain its winning margin in ethnically heterogeneous constituencies, it could have exercised the option either of seeking upper caste support or Scheduled Caste support or both. Why did it not choose to seek the support of Scheduled Castes, either by seeking an alliance with the BSP or by courting Scheduled Caste support independently? An SP–BSP alliance was closed mainly because of the vociferous opposition of the BSP. The option of seeking Scheduled Caste support independently was no doubt made more difficult by the polarization between sections of the backward castes and Scheduled Castes alluded to earlier. However, it cannot be taken to be a sufficient reason. In addition, the decision seems to have been based on the calculation that the Scheduled Castes were firmly welded to the BSP and could not be weaned away by the SP in a single election. As one former SP candidate assessing his party's prospects among Scheduled Castes put it: 'If you want Scheduled Caste support, you need to form an alliance with Kanshi Ram. Otherwise you can forget it.'[57] The political unity of Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh, however, is superimposed on significant differences among individual castes classified under the label. The calculation, therefore, is best understood as a short-term reaction to immediate circumstances. There is no reason why it might not be revised in subsequent elections. The immediate difficulty of obtaining support from the Scheduled Castes made it all the more imperative for the SP to make an aggressive bid for the support of the backward castes and upper castes in order to obtain its winning margin.

The Samajwadi Party registered the sharpest gains in the 1998 Lok Sabha election, increasing its vote by almost 8 percent compared to the 1996 Lok Sabha election (see Figure 3.1). It is now the second largest party in Uttar Pradesh. Support for the SP is spread throughout every region in the state, except Uttarakhand (see Map 3.4). In Rohillkhand, it is the leading party. In every other region, it is close on the heels of the BJP.

The Impact of Ethnification

By 1998, therefore, it is clear that the party system in Uttar Pradesh had been taken over by ethnic parties. Many of those concerned with the general study of Indian politics might view the development of an ethnic party system in Uttar Pradesh as a crisis of serious proportions. In an influential study published in 1989, Myron Weiner argued that 'the conflict-managing role of [the] Congress has been one of the critical

factors in India's capacity to sustain democratic institutions in spite of violent social conflict'.[58] This is the most explicit statement of a view shared by almost all other students of Indian politics, which look with favor at the mediation of interests within a single centrist party and with trepidation at the clash of interests across narrower ethnic parties. No wonder then that one scholar describes the crisis of the Congress in India as a 'crisis of the state itself'.[59]

The argument that the crisis of the Congress is a crisis of the state judges the Congress on a single dimension: its ability to provide stability. With some important exceptions, fewer scholars have recognized that the stability provided by the Congress has come at a price: the perpetuation of an extremely unequal distribution of political power, wealth and well-being between dominant and subordinate ethnic categories.[60] Sudipta Kaviraj, for example, offers an exceedingly benign interpretation of the Congress when he writes: 'Congress [thus] followed characteristically moderate, unradical policies which irritated opinion at the two ends of the political spectrum but left the bulk in the middle in a state of moderate contentment.'[61] At least in the case of Uttar Pradesh, a more accurate assessment might point out that the Congress followed policies that benefited mainly the dominant and the peasant-proprietor castes in the state and left the bulk at the bottom (Scheduled Castes, Muslims, and large sections of the backward castes) in a state of extreme deprivation.

The bias in favor of political stability is understandable, given the omnipresent awareness of the vulnerability of India's existence as a multi-ethnic democracy following the partition of India in 1947. However, the welfare of subordinate groups, especially when they include vast sections of the population, should be considered an equally important dimension in judging the performance of a democratic system. A more balanced comparison of the impact of a party system dominated by the centrist Congress and the ethnic-party system that has replaced it must evaluate the performance of each system on both dimensions. The ethnification of the party system in Uttar Pradesh has undoubtedly been accompanied by explosions of violence (the wave of Hindu–Muslim riots that accompanied the Rath Yatra; the anti-reservation riots that followed the Mandal Commission announcement; the inter-caste violence that followed the establishment of the SP–BSP government in Uttar Pradesh). However, for reasons that I will elaborate here, it is likely to produce sporadic bouts of violence followed by periods of relative peace rather than the intense and escalating conflict that leads to the destabilization of a political system. At the same time, it has been

accompanied by a restructuring of power relations in favor of subordinate groups that is likely to produce a corresponding increase in their welfare. To the extent that the ethnification of the party system has resulted in the empowerment of subordinate groups within a sporadic and self-limiting increase in conflict, it should be judged as having, on balance, a positive effect on the functioning of democratic institutions in India.

Sporadic and Self-Limiting Conflict

The expectation that the formation of parties along ethnic fault lines is likely to lead to destabilizing conflict comes from two traits normally associated with ethnic party systems: the identification of an ethnic 'outsider' as a focus of hatred; and the attempt, through the control of the state, to exclude the 'outsider' group from positions of power and influence or, at the very least, to diminish its rights.[62] While both traits undoubtedly lead to conflict, the behavior of the three ethnic parties in Uttar Pradesh indicates that neither is permanently associated with an ethnic party system. The electoral incentives of ethnically heterogeneous constituencies have led parties to switch from the strategy of demonizing and excluding outsiders to the strategy of building bridges between included and excluded categories, as the SP and BSP have done, or at a minimum, to cease hostilities, as the BJP did between Hindus and Muslims. At one level, then, it is clear that the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies has so far exerted a powerful moderating effect on conflict.

However, the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies is not an objective fact. Given the multiplicity of cleavage lines in any single constituency, each could also be constructed as bi-polar or homogeneous depending on which cleavage is treated as dominant. For example, if we classify the electorate only by religion, then the constituencies in Uttar Pradesh become either homogeneous (mainly Hindu) or bi-polar (with a Hindu majority or Muslim minority). If we classify the electorate only by aggregate caste categories (forward, backward and Scheduled Caste), then each constituency becomes tripolar. If we treat region as a classifying category, then Uttar Pradesh becomes defined by six clusters of homogeneous constituencies. In fact, the early strategies of each of the three parties were an effort precisely to identify a 'master cleavage' that would transform the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies into a more favorable configuration. Ethnically heterogeneous constituencies therefore are only a proximate cause for the dampening of initially explosive

conflict. A deeper explanation must identify the factors that preserve the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies as a 'stubborn fact' in spite of frequent efforts by political parties to transform it.

The answer, I argue, lies in an institutional framework that provides deep incentives for the cross-cutting of any 'master cleavage' by another. In particular, three institutional devices reward ethnic mobilization along multiple cleavage lines. The first and most important device is India's affirmative action policy. The Indian constitution empowers the central and state governments to provide preferential treatment for 'socially and educationally backward classes' without explicitly identifying the groups to be included in the category 'backward classes'. Galanter points out that the term 'backward classes' was intended, and has come to be accepted, as a euphemism for caste- and not class-based groups: 'the "Backward Classes", by whomever designated and according to whatever tests they were chosen, were expected to be a list of castes or communities.'[63] However, *which* castes and communities were to be included was left undefined. By privileging caste in the understanding of the category 'backward classes', the constitution laid the foundation for the political activation of caste identity, and erected mobilization based on caste as a permanent counter to mobilization based on religion. At the same time, by not listing the castes to be included in the category or the criteria according to which they were to be included, it provided the basis for an impressive fluidity in the caste coalitions that emerged or are likely to emerge. Since it has never been made clear who the backward classes are, politicians have enormous latitude in nominating different combinations and subsections of castes as candidates for backwardness. The publication of the Mandal Commission Report has not settled the question of who the backward classes are, but has created an environment for the emergence of yet more proposals for inclusion and exclusion. In Uttar Pradesh, a plethora of categories have been nominated for recognition or de-recognition as 'backward' in an eight year period between 1990–1998: the Other Backward Castes (the list of castes listed in the Mandal Commission Report); the most backward castes (treated so far as a negatively defined category, excluding sections of the Other Backward Castes);[64] 'forward among backward' (the advantaged among the Other Backward Castes); 'backward among the forward' (poorer sections of the upper castes). As a result, while caste identity undermines the development of a Hindu majority as a cohesive community, it is itself prevented by the process of continuous redefinition of caste categories from becoming the basis of a cohesive political community.

Two other institutional devices exist in turn as counterpoints to caste and religion: the policy on state boundaries and that on language. These have been less important in Uttar Pradesh than the affirmative action policy so far, but have the potential to emerge in the future. The Indian constitution empowers the central government to carve new states out of old ones through simple majority legislation.[65] The central government in turn has established precedents that privilege language, tribe, and regional identities over religion and caste identities in the redrawing of state boundaries.[66] These constitutional provisions and the precedents surrounding them provide inbuilt incentives for ethnic mobilization based on language, region, or tribe. Any religion- or caste-based mobilization, therefore, is inherently vulnerable to counter-mobilizations based on these alternative identities.

In Uttar Pradesh, the most recent example of such a counter-mobilization is the agitation for the formation of a separate Uttarakhand state, comprising the eight hill districts of Garhwal and Kumaon. The Uttarakhand agitation, by emphasizing regional identity, cuts across the religious cleavage. Its relationship to the caste cleavage is more ambiguous. The agitation was in part a response to the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in Uttar Pradesh, which reserved 27 percent of government jobs for the backward castes. Backward-castes constitute only a tiny proportion of Uttarakhand's population, and the agitation for a separate state was led by upper caste groups who feared that they would be displaced. To some extent, therefore, region and caste coincide in this case. However, Uttarakhand also has a significant minority of Scheduled Castes, and the Uttarakhand agitation cuts across the effort to build a common cleavage dividing Scheduled Castes from others. The constitutional provisions on state boundaries, furthermore, provide the basis of potential mobilizations in the future in the other regions of Uttar Pradesh that cross-cut the currently dominant mobilizations around religion and caste.

Finally, the language policy of the Indian state which establishes a hierarchy of languages, each with different status and benefits, provides a third basis for cross-cutting mobilization.[67] At the top of the hierarchy are the official languages of the union: Hindi and English. The official languages of the union are used for communication in parliament, communication at the center, and between the central and state governments. At the second level are the official languages of the states, used for communication in the state governments. At the third level are 'mother tongues'. The state is obligated to arrange for instruction for

the languages designated as 'mother tongues' up to the primary level, but these languages are not used in the conduct of state business. Although the official languages of the Indian union are designated in the constitution, the official languages of the state are left to be decided by simple majority legislation at the state level. Where the state controls as vast a chunk of jobs as it does in Uttar Pradesh and the rest of India, the language used in the transaction of state business is a matter of utmost concern for individuals in search of upward mobility. The relative ease with which the official language of the state can be changed, therefore, provides incentives for members of disadvantaged linguistic groups to mobilize themselves as a political community. In Uttar Pradesh, this mobilization has so far taken the form of a demand for the institution of Urdu as a second official language. Since those who speak Urdu are predominantly Muslim, this has so far reinforced the religious cleavage. However, the potential for other bases for linguistic mobilization that cut across religion and caste should not be ignored, even though such mobilizations appear to be unlikely in the present. Brass points, for example, to the existence of Bhojpuri as a 'minority mother tongue' in Uttar Pradesh. So far, Bhojpuri has been treated as a dialect of Hindi, and educated Bhojpuri speakers have not sought a separate official status for their language.[68] As long as language policy remains an open question, however, the possibility that such currently dormant cleavages might be activated in the future political arena cannot be ruled out.

The existence of deep incentives for competing mobilizations along several ethnic dimensions means that any attempt at constructing one ethnic cleavage as dominant immediately generates an equal and opposite reaction on another dimension. As a result, the heterogeneous nature of electoral constituencies is not only preserved, but new bases for heterogeneity are created. The heterogeneous nature of constituencies, in turn, exerts a dampening effect on the overall level of conflict in the system in the following ways: first, no party is able to build a stable majority on its own, and must reach out to groups outside its core voters and groups that it formerly excluded. Second, since the dimensions of mobilization keep changing, no single group, no matter how defined, is permanently excluded from the political system. If we look at the party system in Uttar Pradesh as a whole, every group has found a voice in the political system: upper castes are being courted by the BJP, the BSP, and the SP; backward castes are being courted by all three parties; Muslims, although excluded by the BJP, are being courted by the SP and the BSP; and Scheduled Castes, although left alone by the SP, are being pursued by the BSP and the BJP.

This argument, as should be clear, goes beyond the frequently-made argument that cross-cutting cleavages in Indian society prevent the escalation of conflict. Cross-cutting cleavages exist in almost every society, and the mere fact of cross-cutting cleavages does not prevent the elevation of any one cleavage from becoming dominant. Certainly, in India, the existence of cross-cutting cleavages did not prevent enduring mobilization along the religious cleavage in pre-partition India. The question of interest in the case of Uttar Pradesh is why such cross-cutting cleavages persist? Why have they not been overcome by efforts to produce a single master cleavage? The answer lies in the fact that they have been *institutionalized*.

Finally, it should be noted that the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies produced by the institutionalization of cross-cutting cleavages prevents the escalation of conflict, but it does not prevent serious explosions of conflict at periodic intervals. What I have tried to show is that competing mobilizations checkmate each other and force initially opposed parties or groups to cooperate. However, such cooperation is fragile. Given the rewards of winning majority control of the state, we can expect political parties to periodically look for new ways of forging ethnic majorities. And each time the process of mobilization and counter-mobilization begins, it is likely to be accompanied by conflict in its initial stages before settling down to co-existence. Given the progressive moderation on the part of each political party in Uttar Pradesh following an initially polarizing strategy, it might be tempting to conclude that the ethnic heterogeneity of constituencies will produce steadily declining levels of conflict. The evidence suggests, however, that with an ethnic party system, it is reasonable only to expect stretches of peace punctuated by bursts of violence, not a more peaceful society overall.

Empowerment of Subordinate Ethnic Categories

The costs of sporadic conflict should be weighed against the empowerment of subordinate ethnic categories that has accompanied the ethnification of the party system. The leadership of the Congress, especially after the exit of Charan Singh and his followers from the party in 1967, was drawn mainly from the ranks of Hindu upper castes (Brahmins, Thakurs, and Banias).[69] Their dominance in the ruling party meant that upper castes monopolized the vast resources of the state in Uttar Pradesh. At the same time, the dispersion of individuals belonging to

subordinate ethnic categories among multi-ethnic factions and the reluctance of the Congress to recognize ethnic identity as the basis of legitimate political action, prevented them from organizing effectively to protect their interests. As Brass points out:

> The principles on which [the] Congress has organized diversity do not necessarily foster the long term goals of political development. Low caste and economically weak groups participate in factions dominated by high and economically powerful castes. Under these conditions, the economically deprived are divided and sufficiently prevented from challenging the social and economic dominance of high caste groups.[70]

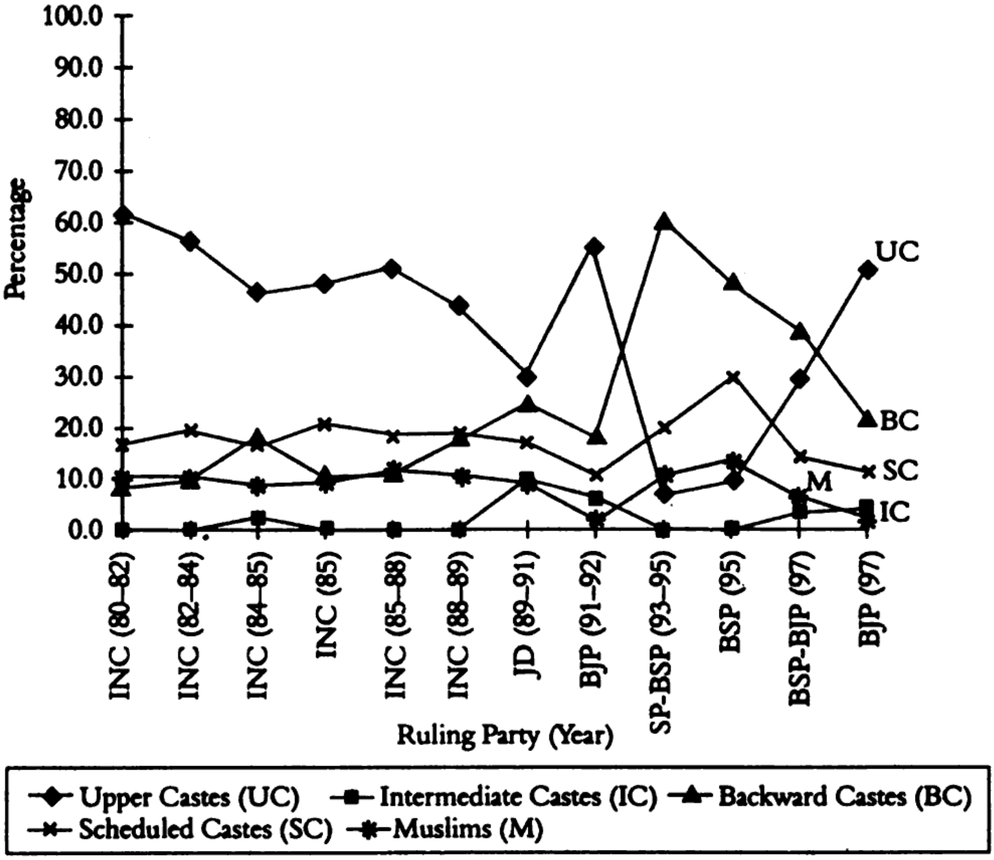
Imposed on a pattern of inter-ethnic domination and subordination, centrism became in effect a means to magnify the existing patterns of inequality.

Although the upper castes, now represented by the BJP, continue to be influential in Uttar Pradesh, the attempt by the SP and BSP to mobilize subordinate ethnic categories as cohesive political blocks has produced a shift in the balance of political power in the governments and legislatures of Uttar Pradesh.

Figure 3.5 summarizes the ethnic profile of the council of ministers in Uttar Pradesh from 1980 to 1997 (see also Table 3.2). The year 1980 is chosen as an initial point simply because it is the first year for which I was able to obtain reliable data.[71] As the figure indicates, upper castes towered over every other ethnic category in their representation in Congress-run governments in Uttar Pradesh. Between 1980 and 1989, the strength of upper castes was on a declining trajectory. However, even at the lowest point on the graph, in 1989, almost half the posts in the council of ministers were occupied by members of this category. Upper castes were not only numerically dominant, they also controlled the important portfolios.

Backward castes have been rising slowly within Congress governments since 1980. By 1989, their representation had doubled from 9 percent in 1980 to 20 percent in 1989. However, they were excluded from plum portfolios. According to Paul Brass, apart from the post of chief minister, four Cabinet berths carry with them the greatest patronage and prestige in the districts: home, industries, education, and cooperation.[72] No backward caste minister of Cabinet rank was given any of these posts in the period covered by figure 3.5. Scheduled Castes obtained a stable share of roughly one-fifth of the council of ministers.

Figure 3.5: Ethnic Profile of the Uttar Pradesh Council of Ministers, 1980–1997



The education portfolio was offered once to a Scheduled Caste member, from 1984–1985. However, like the backward castes, Scheduled Castes remained by and large outside positions of real power and influence. Muslims were least well represented, ranging between 10 and 14 percent of the council of ministers throughout this period. However, they were marginally better off than the two other categories to the extent that the education portfolio was held by a succession of Muslim ministers from 1980–1982 and from 1985–1988.

The gap between upper castes and subordinate ethnic categories was dramatically narrowed in 1989, when the Janata Dal government came to power. Mulayam Singh, the chief minister of the Janata Dal government, was from the backward castes. Upper caste representation in the council of ministers fell to a third, although they continued to be the single largest ethnic category. Since 1989, the dominance of the upper castes in government has been replaced by a pattern of alternation between dominant and subordinate categories in government. Upper

Table 3.2: Ethnic Profile of the Uttar Pradesh Council of Ministers, 1980–1997

Ruling Party	*INC*	*INC*	*INC*	*INC*	*INC*	*INC*	*JD*	*BJP*	*SP-BSP*	*BSP*	*BSP-BJP*	*BJP*
Year	*(1980–1982)*	*(1982–1984)*	*(1984–1985)*	*(1985)*	*(1985–1988)*	*(1988–1989)*	*(1989–1991)*	*(1991–1992)*	*(1993–1995)*	*(1995)*	*(1997)*	*(1997)*
Total	*45*	*26*	*48*	*37*	*35*	*46*	*55*	*47*	*28*	*33*	*47*	*93*
Upper Castes (UC)	62.2	57.7	47.9	48.6	51.4	45.7	32.7	55.3	7.1	9.1	29.8	53.8
Intermediate Castes (IC)	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	6.4	0.0	0.0	4.3	4.3
Backward Castes (BC)	8.9	11.5	18.8	13.5	14.3	19.6	25.5	21.3	60.7	48.5	40.4	26.9
Scheduled Castes (SC)	15.6	19.2	16.7	21.6	17.1	17.4	16.4	10.6	21.4	30.3	17.0	12.9
Muslims (M)	11.1	11.5	10.4	10.8	14.3	13.0	9.1	2.1	10.7	12.1	8.5	2.2
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	2.2	0.0	4.2	2.7	2.9	2.2	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	2.2	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: The lists of the council of ministers from 1980–1998 are from Bhal Chandra Shukla, *Uttar Pradesh Main Mantri-Mandalon Ka Gathan* (Lucknow: Vidhan Sabha Secretariat, 1988). For 1989–1997, the lists were obtained from Mr. Hemant Sharma of *Jansatta* (Lucknow) and from the individual party offices. The ethnic profile of the council of ministers from each party were obtained through interviews at individual party offices. All interviews were conducted in December 1997.

Figures in columns are rounded percentages.

castes were surpassed by subordinate ethnic categories for the first time in the SP–BSP government in 1993, when they had the lowest representation in the council of ministers than any other single category, and again in the BSP government of 1995, and the BSP–BJP government of 1997. In the 1993 government, there was only one upper caste minister of Cabinet rank in the government, with the relatively minor portfolio of urban development. Every other Cabinet post was occupied by a member of one of the three subordinate categories. In 1995, the BSP leader Mayawati became the first Scheduled Caste chief minister in the state of Uttar Pradesh. As before, there was only one upper caste Cabinet member in the Mayawati government. Of the four important portfolios listed earlier, Mayawati retained home and allotted the remaining three to backward caste ministers. In 1997, the Mayawati-led coalition government incorporated several upper caste Cabinet ministers, most from the BJP. However, of the four prominent portfolios, an upper caste minister was given charge of 'higher education'. Mayawati retained control of home and industries, while the Cabinet portfolio of cooperatives went to a Scheduled Caste minister, and a backward caste minister controlled secondary education. Upper castes regained their position twice when the BJP came to power in 1991 and 1997. However, even the BJP has had to respond to the challenge posed by the SP and BSP by giving a greater share of power to backward castes. In both these governments, the BJP chief minister came from the backward castes and the important portfolios were shared between the upper castes and subordinate categories. In 1997, for example, Kalyan Singh retained control of the home and industries portfolios, allotted the cooperatives portfolio to a backward caste minister, and divided the education portfolio between a backward caste and an upper caste Cabinet minister.

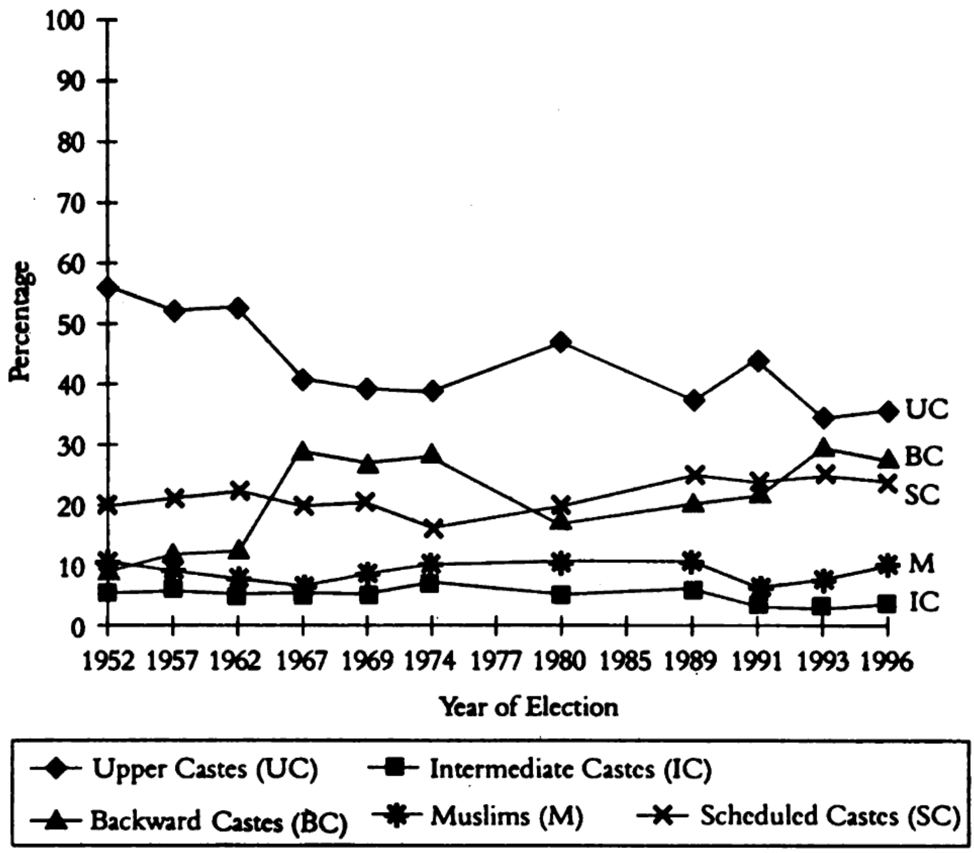
If we look at which subordinate ethnic categories have gained most from the ethnification of the party system, it is clearly the backward castes, followed by the Scheduled Castes. Muslims are shown to be somewhat worse off under an ethnic party system than under a Congress dominated party system. As long as the Congress was in charge, Muslims occupied a stable number of posts in the council of ministers. In the ethnic party system, however, their position has undergone sharp fluctuations. When either the BSP or the SP have been in power, their representation in the council of ministers has remained roughly the same as in the Congress governments. On both occasions that the BJP has come to power, however, Muslim representation in the council of

ministers has plummeted. While acknowledging that the position of Muslims under an ethnic party system is no better so far than under the Congress system, it is also worth pointing out that there is an inbuilt corrective to the under-representation of Muslims in the competition between the SP and the BSP. While the rise of the BJP threatens to exclude Muslims from positions of power in Uttar Pradesh, the competition between the SP and the BSP for Muslim votes has resulted in an 'outbidding' effect between these two parties as each offers Muslims greater representation than the other. In 1993, when Mulayam Singh and the Bahujan Samaj Party fought the state election in alliance, only 10 percent of the SP MLAs were Muslim. In 1996, when the two parties competed against each other, although the number of MLAs from the SP remained unchanged, the percentage of Muslim MLAs from the SP doubled from 10 to 20 percent,[73] a jump that can only be attributed to the fear on the part of the SP that the BSP might outflank it as a contender for Muslim support. Paradoxically, therefore, the best prospects for Muslims in Uttar Pradesh seems to lie in the competition between, not the collusion of, the 'secular' parties.

Figure 3.6 summarizes the increase in political representation of the various ethnic categories in the four state legislative assemblies in Uttar Pradesh between 1952 and 1996, excluding the years 1977 and 1985, for which data is not available (see also Table 3.3).

The gap between upper caste MLAs in the Uttar Pradesh legislature and MLAs belonging to subordinate ethnic categories is narrowing, especially since 1993. The greatest surge in representation is associated with members of the backward caste category. The representation of OBCs in the state legislature in 1996 was 27.43 percent, approximately the same as in 1967, the other high point of backward caste representation in Uttar Pradesh. The percentage of Scheduled Caste MLAs appears to have increased slightly: in the period 1952–1980, it did not exceed 20 percent, while following 1989, it ranged between 23 percent and 25 percent. However, this reflects in all probability a bias in the data, which results in a slight overestimate of Scheduled Caste MLAs (see explanatory note in Table 3.3). The pattern of representation of Muslims in the legislative assembly similarly does not show any changes: it fluctuated within the same range in 1989–1996 as it did between 1952–1980. However, even where the number of Scheduled Caste and Muslim MLAs is the same, it must be kept in mind that the individuals elected from these categories in 1989 have come to power by mobilizing Muslims and Scheduled Castes as independent political forces. The

Figure 3.6: Ethnic Profile of Uttar Pradesh State Legislative Assemblies, 1952–1996



need to ensure their own political survival gives them an incentive to be more responsive to these categories than previous Scheduled Caste or Muslim legislators elected from the Congress.

It is too soon to offer more than suggestive evidence on the relationship between the political empowerment of subordinate ethnic categories and well-being of the vast majority of the population that belongs to these categories. However, there is reason to believe that the two are positively related. First, the induction of subordinate categories into positions of power has rendered the state more accessible to members of these categories. All over rural Uttar Pradesh, the villager goes to the state as a suppliant looking for a favor, not as a citizen demanding a right. Anyone who has witnessed the interaction between the office of the district magistrate and the numbers of people queuing up for an audience can attest to this fact. With the empowerment of subordinate castes, the state has been transformed from overlord to ally. Where members of subordinate ethnic categories may earlier have beseeched

Table 3.3: Ethnic Profile of Uttar Pradesh State Assemblies, 1952–1996

	1952	*1957*	*1962*	*1967*	*1969*	*1974*	*1977*	*1980*	*1985*	*1989*	*1991*	*1993*	*1996*
Upper Castes (UC)	56.0	52.0	53.0	40.3	39.0	38.8	–	47.0	–	37.2	43.6	34.3	35.7
Intermediate Castes (IC)	5.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	4.9	7.0	–	5.0	–	5.7	3.4	2.8	3.2
Backward Castes (BC)	9.0	12.0	13.0	29.3	26.8	28.4	–	18.0	–	20.8	22.1	29.5	27.4
Scheduled Castes (SC)	20.0	21.0	22.0	19.8	20.9	16.3	–	20.0	–	24.7	23.4	24.8	23.4
Muslims (M)	10.0	9.0	7.0	5.7	8.2	9.6	–	10.0	–	10.4	6.0	7.5	9.5
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5
Others	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.8	1.1	0.8	0.3
Total (Percentage)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	N.A.	100.0	N.A.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N (Excluding Unknowns)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	–	N.A.	–	384	381	400	401

Sources: For 1952–1969, the figures are from R.C. Meyer, 'Political Elite in an Underdeveloped Society: The Case of UP', Ph.D Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1969, cited in Zoya Hasan, *Quest for Power: Oppositional Movements and Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), Table 4.12. For 1974 and 1980, the figures are taken directly from Hasan, Table 4.12. The percentages for 1977 and 1985 are not available. For 1989 onwards, the figures are based on my own fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh in December 1997, where I collected information on the individual caste background of each MLA through interviews at individual party offices. In selecting the sources from which to cite figures, I have followed the following rule: I rely on information collected through my own field research wherever I have such information. Where I do not have data collected through my own fieldwork, I rely on the two sources cited. Where there are discrepancies in the figures that I have collected and those cited in the two sources above, I rely on my own material. For instance, there are substantial discrepancies between the figures that I cite for 1991 and 1993 and those cited in Hasan, Table 4.14. In these instances, I rely on the data that I have collected.

Note that the percentages for 1989–1996 are calculated by excluding the 'unknowns' from the total. This was done in order to keep the categorization consistent with the pre-1989 tables, which do not include a category for 'unknowns'. The list of 'unknowns' for 1989–1996 includes no Muslims (whom it is easy to identify through the last name) and is likely to include only a small number of Scheduled Castes, since most Scheduled Caste MLAs can be identified based on whether they stood from 'reserved' constituencies. The figures for 1989–1996, therefore, are likely to slightly overestimate the percentage of Scheduled Caste and Muslim MLAs, and slightly underestimate the percentage of MLAs from other categories in the legislature.

Figures in columns are rounded percentages.

the state as an alien giver, they now demand services as a right. As one Congress worker pointed out, for example: 'The minute Mulayam Singh Yadav becomes chief minister, the Yadavs will put on their best clothes and show up at the door of the district magistrate, demanding that he do their work—and simply to get rid of them, he will do it!'[74] Notwithstanding the derision, the comment reveals the sense of efficacy and entitlement that has risen among subordinate ethnic categories in Uttar Pradesh. Yadavs are comparatively better off among subordinate ethnic categories in Uttar Pradesh. However, the same sense of entitlement is evident among Scheduled Castes as well. As the same worker pointed out: 'The BSP's voter [this was a euphemism for Scheduled Castes] now goes straight to Lucknow if his work is not done. He understands the meaning of a share in power.'

I should point out that the idea of the state as a neutral force standing above all ethnic categories is not taken seriously by anyone in Uttar Pradesh. The subordinate categories who now boldly approach the state see it not as a neutral state, but as a weapon temporarily in their control; and when the upper castes regain control of the state, it is similarly used to further their particular interests. Neither side expects anything of the state when it slips out of their grip. One Scheduled Caste youth, facing resistance from a local bureaucrat in obtaining an appointment letter for a government job, put it philosophically: 'It's because our government has fallen. If our government was in power, he would have given me that letter in two minutes.'[75] By *our* government he meant of course a BSP government headed by a Scheduled Caste chief minister. The eclipse of the notion of an impartial government, however, should not be associated with the advent of an ethnic party system. As several previous studies have pointed out, the Indian state, and certainly the state in Uttar Pradesh, has long been notorious for its partiality.[76] What has changed with the ethnification of the party system is that the ownership of the state has begun to alternate between dominant and subordinate categories. Where the ideal of a neutral state is in any case distant, the reality of 'revolving door' control of the state may be the next best option. To the extent that no ethnic category is permanently excluded from a shot at power, the vital interests of each are safeguarded.

Second, the induction of members of subordinate categories in the government, legislature, and bureaucracy has diverted the flow of resources controlled by the state towards members of subordinate categories. The state in Uttar Pradesh, as in the rest of India, controls the 'life chances' of individuals from birth to death.[77] Nowhere is this more

obvious than at the district level in rural areas, where the majority of the population of Uttar Pradesh resides: births, if they take place in a hospital at all, take place in a government hospital, where access to a bed is a prized commodity; primary education is only available through government schools; chances for higher education depend upon obtaining a highly contested seat in government-funded universities in the state capital; and, most importantly, the bulk of employment opportunities are controlled by the state.[78] The state is the single largest employer in the country, controlling 71 percent of the jobs in the organized economy.[79]

The vast resources controlled by the state are distributed primarily through networks of patronage.[80] Individuals struggling to get ahead, therefore, cannot expect their life chances to be boosted by the benign actions of an impartial state. Rather, the obvious path to upward mobility is either to become a part of the state and so obtain control over the flow of patronage, or to be close to someone who controls state power and so become a consumer if not a distributor of patronage benefits. As pointed out earlier, those who controlled the flow of patronage and those directly in line to receive them were members of the upper castes. To point to the monopolization of benefits by upper castes is not to imply some form of closed caste solidarity among upper castes. It is simply to point out that even though upper castes were in competition with each other, the structure of the competition made it unnecessary to expend significant resources on subordinate ethnic categories.

An example from Brass's description of the factional system in Uttar Pradesh in the 1960s helps to illustrate this point. In 1960, the composition of the two dominant factions at the state level, one led by C. B. Gupta (a Bania) and another by Sampurnanand (a Kayastha) were as follows:[81]

	Gupta	Sampurnanand
Upper Caste	10	12
Intermediate Caste	1	1
Backward Caste	0	0
Scheduled Caste	0	2
Muslim	1	3
Unknown	1	1
Total	13	19

The factional divide at the state level was replicated at the district level, where the local factions encompassed competing groups almost

entirely *within* the dominant castes. Where not only the top tier, but several subsequent tiers of leadership are drawn from upper castes, it stands to reason that faction leaders would devote the greatest amount of resources to purchasing upper caste support. Members of subordinate ethnic categories, standing at the bottom of the factional ladder, naturally obtained a smaller share. As the number of legislators and ministers from subordinate ethnic categories has increased, the patronage networks available to members of these categories have multiplied. Second, to the extent that ethnic parties have now mobilized these categories as independent political forces, upper castes now have greater incentives to purchase their support than they did under the Congress system.

Ultimately, the extent to which patronage politics can affect the well-being of the vast majority of the population that belongs to subordinate ethnic categories is limited. The two areas that have the greatest capacity to affect the well-being of subordinate ethnic categories in Uttar Pradesh—land reforms and education—cannot be addressed through patronage politics but require structural reforms. However, it is unlikely that any of the post-Congress political parties in Uttar Pradesh will pursue such initiatives. The BSP is the only party that can unequivocally support land reform legislation in Uttar Pradesh, since it draws its support from Scheduled Castes and the lower sections of the backward castes who would benefit most from land reforms. The SP and the BJP, however, obtain their core support from land-owning castes: the SP from the Yadavs and the BJP from the Hindu upper castes. Even though both are vying for the support of the 'most backward castes', the constraints imposed by their core base of supporters means that they are likely to be vehemently opposed to the idea of land reforms. BSP governments have attempted to implement existing policy on the redistribution of government land more forcefully. However, as a straggling third force in Uttar Pradesh with little hope of obtaining a majority of its own, the BSP is simply not in a position to introduce land reform legislation.

The question of educational reform is equally unlikely, for different reasons. The reform of the primary education system, as Dreze and Gazdar point out, cannot be accomplished through short-term measures: 'Transforming the educational situation is not just a question of increasing public spending on education, or of accelerating the quantitative expansion of educational facilities, or of introducing ad hoc schemes to supplement the basic schooling system, or of undertaking a

short-term "campaign" for total literacy.'[82] Rather, it is a long-term project that requires considerable initial investment. Nor is it clear that the increasingly enfeebled state has the capacity to carry through educational reform successfully.[83] Where the payoff is both distant and uncertain, no party has the incentive to engage in such a reform. Not surprisingly, therefore, none of the three parties in Uttar Pradesh places the issue of educational reform on the political agenda, even though each seeks to win the support of one or more educationally disadvantaged ethnic categories. Rather, they court support by making promises that they can readily implement and that yield immediate payoffs. The most attractive such promise is increasing representation in party and state institutions.

While the political empowerment of subordinate ethnic categories in Uttar Pradesh through an ethnic party system is not likely to result in structural reform in the immediate future, the fact that it has diverted the flow of benefits distributed by the state to subordinate ethnic categories is no small success. Structural reform was not on the agenda even when the Congress Party was in power. In fact, the almost four decades of Congress rule in Uttar Pradesh were marked by 'resilient government inertia' as far as either land reforms or education policy were concerned.[84] The constraints on structural reform, therefore, are not unique to an ethnic party system. Paradoxically, ethnic politics, by offering subordinate ethnic categories a share in the state and the limited benefits that go with this share, has strengthened the legitimacy of Indian democracy in spite of its massive failure to bring about the structural changes that will improve the quality of life of the vast majority of its population.[85] To be sanguine about ethnic politics, therefore, is not to be sanguine about the performance of democracy in India. It is merely to point out that the main threat to Indian democracy does not come, as is often supposed, from the politicization of ethnic differences. Rather, it comes from a more fundamental malaise of the state which the fear of ethnic parties helps to obscure.

Notes and References

1. This article is based on fieldwork conducted in Uttar Pradesh between 1996 and 1998. The SSRC–MacArthur Foundation funded the broader research project which informs this article. The Department of Government at Harvard provided supplementary funding for travel to India during the 1998 parliamentary election. The Center for

the Study of Developing Societies was practically my second home in Delhi, providing institutional support and stimulating discussions throughout the period of my fieldwork. I am grateful to all three institutions. For detailed comments on the article, I would like to thank Paul Brass, Devesh Kapur, Pratap Mehta, Ashutosh Varshney, and Paul Wallace. While many of these comments could not be incorporated in this publication, they have significantly improved the broader research project of which this paper is a part. Finally, this article owes a great deal to the generosity of several individuals, only some of whom I name here: Ram Advani, Himanshu Bhattacharya, Paul Brass, Professor Arun Chowdhury, Yubaraj Ghimire, Zoya Hasan, Shari Heier, C. P. Jha, Pappu Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, Kanchan Malhotra, Arlene Olivero, Ashok Priyadarshi, Nirmala Sharma, Hemant Sharma, Udai Sinha, Priya and Randeep Wahraich, and Yogendra Yadav. Among the most important of those excluded are the political workers and leaders from all parties who shared their knowledge of politics and society in India with me. In order to protect their confidence, I generally follow a policy of reporting their positions but not their names (even though most of the evidence I cite is from formal interviews). I cite the name only when it is important to the interpretation of evidence from an interview. Their contribution, however, makes them collective co-authors, and I regret that the concern for confidentiality prevents me from acknowledging this contribution individually.

2. For studies on the 'second democratic upsurge', see Yogendra Yadav, 'Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections 1993–95', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2 and 3, January 13–20, 1996, pp. 95–104; and Yogendra Yadav, 'The Idea of Democracy', *Seminar*, 461, January 1998, pp. 58–61.
3. Note that the figure records only the history of contemporary political parties in Uttar Pradesh. It is not meant to be a summary of all parties that have been important in the politics of Uttar Pradesh in the past. For example, it leaves out the Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Swatantra Party, and the Socialist Party.
4. The analysis is heavily indebted to a reading of Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).
5. All information and quotations from this rally are taken from my notes and recording of the proceedings. For a brief report of the rally, see *Pioneer*, November 15, 1997. It would have been more appropriate here to analyze a rally organized for Sonia Gandhi, who later became the star campaigner of the party. I was unable, however, to obtain a full text of any of Sonia Gandhi's speeches. Extracts from her speeches printed in news reports indicate, however, that she did not depart from the basic Congress strategy employed by Meira Kumar and others.
6. Tiwari resigned following the election results and was replaced on July 4, 1998 by Salman Khursheed (*The Times of India*, March 4, 1998; *India Today*, July 29, 1998).
7. For descriptions of Sonia Gandhi's election campaign in Uttar Pradesh, see reports of her speeches at Amethi (*The Hindustan Times*, February 2, 1998); Meerut and Mohanlalganj (*The Hindu*, February 9, 1998); Mathura (*The Times of India*, February 14, 1998); Muzaffarnagar and Ghaziabad (*Dainik Jagran*, February 14, 1998); Rae Bareli (*The Hindu*, February 15, 1998); and Sitapur (*The Times of India*, February 18, 1998).
8. One example of a 'coded' appeal is the Congress's invocation of threats to national integrity in the 1984 election, which were thinly veiled attempts to stoke the anxieties of the Hindu majority. Another is Rajiv Gandhi's promise to establish 'Ram Rajya' in the 1989 election campaign, widely interpreted as a signal aligning the Congress with the Hindu 'majority'.

9. For examples of local calculations based on ethnic arithmetic, see Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); and Harold Gould, *Grass Roots Politics in India: A Century of Political Evolution in Faizabad District* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1994).
10. See Paul Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); Rajni Kothari, 'The Congress System in India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 12, 1964, pp. 1161–73; and Weiner, *Party Building* (Note 9 above).
11. For the ethnic profile of the support base of the Congress in 1996, see Kanchan Chandra and Chandrika Parmar, 'Party Strategies in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections 1996', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 5, 1997, pp. 214–22. Although data on the ethnic voting patterns of each category in the 1998 Lok Sabha election is not yet available, the dip in the Congress's aggregate vote percentage indicates that the exodus is almost complete.
12. Individual constituency results for the 1998 parliamentary election are from the provisional data on the official website of the Election Commission of India (http://www.eci.gov.in). At the time of writing this article, the Election Commission of India had issued an official report only for the national and state results for the 1998 election.
13. For one example of an editorial treating the BJP as essentially indistinguishable from Congress, see *Pioneer*, January 31, 1998.
14. In addition to numerous newspaper editorials, see Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (London: Viking, 1993), Chapter 14 and the conclusion for the dilution of the BJP's strategy in Uttar Pradesh in the 1993 assembly election in Uttar Pradesh. For a study of its strategy in the 1996 assembly election, see Paul Brass, 'General Elections, 1996 in Uttar Pradesh', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 38, September 20, 1997; and Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above). Taken together, these works depict steady trend in dilution of several aspects of the BJP's pro-Hindu face.
15. BJP Election Rally, Saharanpur, February 14, 1998.
16. *Ibid.*
17. BJP Election Manifesto 1998.
18. L.K. Advani speaking at Ayodhya, reported in *The Hindu*, February 7, 1998.
19. For an example, see Vajpayee's speech at Allahabad, reported in *The Hindustan Times*, January 23, 1998.
20. For examples of the BJP's guarantees to Muslims in Uttar Pradesh during the 1998 campaign, see Advani's speech in Ayodhya, reported in *The Hindu*, February 7, 1998, where he says that the BJP's commitment to Ayodhya is not directed against Muslims; and Vajpayee's assurances in Lucknow, that the BJP would safeguard the security of Muslims, *Deccan Herald*, January 28, 1998.
21. *The Times of India*, February 13, 1998.
22. This is based on BJP candidates as listed in the constituency-wise results published by the Election Commission of India, and Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above).
23. Nationwide, only six tickets were given to Muslim candidates. (*Outlook*, February 23, 1998).
24. Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above).
25. Calculated from Table 3 in Chandra and Parmar, *Ibid.*

26. Based on 1931 Census figures, cited in Zoya Hasan, 'Power Mobilization: Patterns of Resilience and Change in Uttar Pradesh Politics', in Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Vol. I (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
27. Interview with BJP candidate, 1996 assembly election, October 9, 1996.
28. Based on information compiled on caste background of each BJP MLA and minister between 1989 and 1996 through interviews at the BJP party office, Lucknow, December 1997.
29. Interview with BSP worker, Lucknow, April 1996.
30. Ambeth Rajan, *My Bahujan Samaj Party* (New Delhi: ABCDE Publications, 1994), p. 32.
31. BSP Election Rally, Saharanpur, February 14, 1998.
32. For the caste profile of BSP candidates in the 1996 assembly election, see Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above). For the 1998 parliamentary election, the caste profile is taken from Mayawati's speech and corroborated through interviews at the BSP party office, Lucknow.
33. *Pioneer*, October 29, 1993.
34. Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above).
35. BSP election rallies in Saharanpur, February 14, 1998; Gonda, February 19, 1998.
36. See editorials in *The Times of India*, July 3, 1996 and September 28, 1996 for analyses to this effect.
37. This is based on separate interviews with upper caste candidates and BSP workers in several constituencies in Uttar Pradesh.
38. Interview with Kanshi Ram, Shahdol (Madhya Pradesh), March 15, 1997.
39. The announcement must in part have been in response to the defection of upper caste MLAs from the BSP to the BJP government in 1997.
40. Interview with Brahmin candidate from the BSP during the 1998 parliamentary election.
41. See Chandra and Parmar, 'Party strategies' (Note 11 above) for the ethnic profile of the BSP's support base in the 1996 Lok Sabha election.
42. Chandra and Parmar, 'Party strategies' (Note 11 above).
43. In situations where cooperation with the Samajwadi Party does not immediately threaten her vote base, Mayawati has been willing to cooperate with the Samajwadi Party. For example, the BSP and SP cooperated in orchestrating the dismissal of the BJP government in February 1998.
44. See, for example, Saibal Dasgupta, 'The Mulayam Touch', *The Times of India*, January 3, 1993.
45. *The Indian Express*, February 15, 1994. The article itself overestimates the number of violent clashes between OBC and SCs at a higher level. However, it is accompanied by a list of incidents on the basis of which I have revised the published estimate.
46. SP election rally at Saharanpur, February 14, 1998. All further extracts from the speeches of SP members, unless otherwise cited, are from this rally.
47. *Pichda Varg Mahasammelan* (backward classes rally), Lucknow, December 16, 1996.
48. See Marc Galanter, 'Who are the Other Backward Classes?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIII, No. 43, October 28, 1978, for the point that the term 'class' in the category 'backward classes' was intended to be, and has come to be accepted as, a euphemism for caste.
49. SP election rally, Saharanpur, February 14, 1998.
50. *Pichda Varg Mahasammelan*, Lucknow, December 16, 1996.

51. *The Times of India*, January 19, 1998; *Pioneer*, January 16, 1998; *Frontline*, December 27, 1997–January 9, 1998.
52. See Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above).
53. *Adarsha Vaishya Samachar*, February 5–20, 1998; *Pioneer*, February 4, 1998.
54. SP election rally, Saharanpur, February 14, 1998.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Chandra and Parmar, 'Party Strategies' (Note 11 above).
57. Interview with former SP candidate, Lucknow, November 15, 1997.
58. Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 39.
59 Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), p. 185.
60. For important exceptions see several works by Paul Brass (*Theft of an Idol*, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1998; *The Politics of India Since Independence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; and *Factional Politics*, Note 10 above), who has repeatedly drawn attention to the inequalities that accompanied Congress rule. See also Zoya Hasan, *Quest for Power: Oppositional Movements and Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and 'Power and Mobilization' (Note 26 above).
61. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'India: Fifty Years after Independence', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 3–24.
62. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972).
63. Galanter, 'Who are the Other Backward Classes?' (Note 48 above).
64. Although the Mandal Commission has published a separate list of the 'Depressed' among the backward classes, in contemporary political discourse in Uttar Pradesh this term is taken so far to mean simply those OBCs who are not Yadav, not Kurmi, and not Lodh.
65. Article 3, Constitution of India. The central parliament is obligated to consider the views of the state legislature(s) concerned, but these are non-binding.
66. Brass, *The Politics of India* (Note 60 above), p. 173.
67. The description of this hierarchy is taken from Brass's explication of language policy in Brass, *The Politics of India* (Note 60 above), especially p. 175.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
69. *Factional Politics* (Note 10 above).
70. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
71. P. K. Srivastava (*State Government and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1991) offers the only estimate I am aware of the caste profile of Uttar Pradesh Cabinets (not council of ministers) from 1952–1990. However, cross-checks between the figures that I have collected for UP Cabinets from 1980–1990 and those cited in Srivastava reveal substantial discrepancies. I have chosen therefore to rely only on my own data here. Note also that I choose to cite here the profile of the entire council of ministers, not the Cabinets.
72. Brass, *Factional Politics* (Note 10 above), p. 213.
73. Based on information on the caste identity of individual MLAs from the SP collected through interviews with SP office-bearers, December 1997.
74. Interview with Congress worker, Allahabad, November 14, 1997.
75. Interview, Lucknow, November 19, 1997.

76. See Brass, *Theft of an Idol* (Note 60 above), chapter 6, pp. 201–03; Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia', in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds), *Indian Development* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, *The Untouchables* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially chapter 9.
77. Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1991), p. 266.
78. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 255.
79. *Statistical Outline of India, 1995–96* (Mumbai: Tata Services, 1996), p. 146.
80. See Brass, *Factional Politics* (Note 10 above); Weiner, *Party Building* (Note 9 above); Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent* (Note 77 above); and Dreze and Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia' (Note 76 above).
81. Brass, *Factional Politics* (Note 10 above), p. 57.
82. Dreze and Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia' (Note 76 above), p. 74.
83. See Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent* (Note 77 above) for a study of the 'limp' arm of the interventionist state in India.
84. Dreze and Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia' (Note 76 above), p. 53.
85. I am grateful to the remarks by Paul Brass as a discussant on the panel 'Is India Becoming a Democracy from Below?' at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Washington, DC, March 1997, for making this point clear to me. Brass, however, argues that the benefits of the state have been captured by a narrow elite among subordinate ethnic categories, whereas I am more sanguine about the diffusion of these benefits to larger sections of the population of these categories.

4

The 1998 General Election: The Janus-faced Policies of the BJP and Religious Mobilization at the District Level in Uttar Pradesh[1]

Virginia Van Dyke

In this election campaign we did not once hear the sort of vicious non-sense that the likes of Sadhvi Rithambara and Ashok Singhal spouted when they campaigned for the party [BJP] in earlier elections.

Tavleen Singh[2]

I don't want votes from those who eat meat and drink alcohol. I would have to purify the votes before I could use them.

Paraphrased from Swami Ram Vilas Vedhanti's
campaign speechs, 1998 General Election[3]

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) use of religious mobilization under-went a qualitative change between the 1991 and 1996 elections, as the BJP attempted to finesse contentious issues in order to broaden its base of support. This became even more essential in 1998, as the BJP sought to move out of the 'majestic isolation', which had doomed its 13-day government in 1996, by attracting allies. This it succeeded in doing.

The BJP and its associates together gained 36.2 percent of the popular vote, which amounted to an almost 12 percent swing in favor of the BJP combine since 1996. This was the 'first time' such a coalition had been able to exceed the Congress' vote share.[4] But, with the exception of the Shiv Sena, these fractious and disparate allies are uncomfortable with appearing to support polarizing issues such as building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, repealing Article 370, and implementing a uniform civil code. The BJP is also aware that it was 'a Vajpayee wave, not a Ram wave' which brought it to power.[5] Although the party election manifesto had included contentious Hindutva related issues, to the dismay of some of the BJP's more liberal supporters, the joint manifesto issued by the BJP and its allies which actually formed the government after the election, ignored such volatile subjects. This joint manifesto, known as the 'National Agenda for Governance', was 'drafted' by BJP General Secretary Govindacharya,[6] the very individual who had made the infamous statement that the moderate appearing Vajpayee was the 'mask' of the BJP. The need to downplay religious, social, and political red flags was obvious to all.

Still, the BJP is attempting to reconcile two very conflicting aims: widening its base of support to include those not interested in temples, while continuing to placate and attract hard-core proponents of Hindutva—without having the majority in parliament with which to implement an RSS/VHP-friendly program. As a result, the BJP sent out contradictory signals on these issues during the election campaign, bringing out the usual players to perform their standard roles. In 1996, it was Atal Behari Vajpayee who was charming interviewers on television news shows and countering the image of the BJP as a rabid Hindu party, while L. K. Advani was touring in his *Suraj Yatra* and trying to whip up some enthusiasm for Hindutva, claiming that the Ram Mandir was still on the BJP agenda. Again during the 1998 campaign, L. K. Advani confirmed his party's support for building the temple (and according to VHP sources even declaring the BJP's intention to raise the issue of the temple/mosque controversies in Mathura and Benaras), while Vajpayee stressed that nothing should be done without consensus.[7]

Since the election, the double-speak on this issue has become even more disingenuous. In response to media reports that the temple was being prefabricated off-site in preparation for placement, Vajpayee insisted that his government would abide by whatever decision was reached by the courts with regard to construction of the temple.[8] However, chief minister of UP, Kalyan Singh, and Sadhvi Uma Bharti,

minister of state for human resource development, both suggested that there were ways to maneuver around unfavorable court verdicts. In their opinion, Rajiv Gandhi's government had set the example for this by virtually legislating the Shariat into law after a judge had handed down a controversial decision in the Shah Bano case.

For its part, the VHP is well aware of the fact that the BJP does not have the mandate to start 'reclaiming' temples, and in spite of persistent media reports that it is growing impatient, will continue to support the BJP. However, Giriraj Kishore did point out that the RSS had handed down a directive to the BJP not to deviate from 'the main ideological plank'.[9] The VHP is also issuing contradictory statements, asserting in one context that 'work would go ahead only if the court gives favorable judgment or the government makes suitable laws', and in another, 'no force on earth could stop the VHP' from beginning temple construction in November of 2001.[10]

The BJP's use of its VHP-affiliated sadhu MPs as symbols of Hindutva is part of this projection of dual messages, as these MPs can act as representatives of both the parliamentary and non-parliamentary wings of the Sangh Parivar and adjust the message to fit the venue. Swami Chinmayanand, for example, MP from Macchlishahar, dismissed the temple issue as an unimportant concoction of the media in which the BJP had little interest, one day, and chaired a public meeting where the goal of building the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was promoted, the next.[11] In constituencies where the BJP was running VHP-affiliated sadhus as candidates, the message was somewhat mixed. A few aspiring sadhu MPs used overt communalism as their vote gaining strategy, while others accentuated their caste background—paradoxically, since sadhus supposedly have no caste—or issues of economic development. But in general, as had been Congress' policy in the past, 'secularism' was emphasized at the national level, given a different twist by the BJP, while invocations of 'primordial' sentiments were freely made at the district level.[12] But how did such tactics resonate with the voting public?

This type of employment of religious symbols and emotive appeals to religious identity in political mobilization is often subsumed under the heading of ideology or labeled with the catch-all phrase of religious fundamentalism. Although the BJP/VHP/RSS combine certainly has a describable ideology, is ideology the sole explanation for this recent phenomenon? Have powerful religious figures entered the political realm in order to counter what they view as the pernicious effects of

'modernity': secularization including 'pandering' to the minorities, western ideas of equality, the emancipation of women, and rapid social and economic change? And, most importantly, are those who actually vote for VHP sadhus expressing their concurrence with these ideologies and sentiments by doing so?

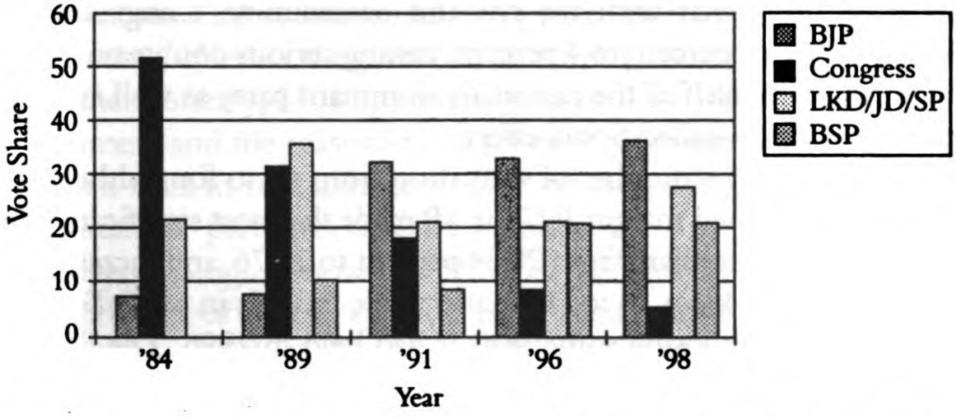
This article will argue that just as VHP sadhus have their own reasons for deciding to enter the political arena aside from ideology, voters may support such individuals for reasons having little to do with religious sentiments. As Brass argued in reference to the 1996 General Election, '... while the rhetoric of political contestation has centered around Ayodhya, Ram and Hindu–Muslim relations, the "real" politics of the state has centered around the distribution of jobs and preferences, privileges and preferments....'[13] Sadhus claim that the unique quality they bring to the political process is their concern for everyone without regard for caste and community, and that voters support them for their moral stance in defense of Hinduism. However, voters often vote for political sadhus for the same reason they might another candidate not dressed in saffron—on party or caste lines. In fact, the support base of political sadhus is largely in their caste group—and in some instances in their associations with powerful mafias—not in their religious aura.

Religious Mobilization and the BJP's Appeals to Caste and Community Groups

During this election, there were no major shifts in support bases for the principle political parties in UP, although there was an increase in the vote share of the Samajwadi Party (SP) (Figure 4.1). There was a groundswell of pro-BJP sentiment, based on the feeling that the BJP had been cheated out of its chance to govern in 1996. The idea of Atal Behari Vajpayee as prime minister was appealing to many, particularly as none of the opposition was able to project anyone clearly as its prime ministerial candidate, and villagers as well as political analysts spoke of the 'Vajpayee wave'. The BJP's vote share increased from 33.44 percent to 36.52 percent, which resulted in an increase in seats from 52 to 56. Along with their allies, the BJP effectively controls 60 seats out of 84 in UP.

Paradoxically the BJP seemed to have benefited from the election drama in which a coup in the state government replaced the BJP administration for a short period—a desperate attempt by anti-BJP forces to

Figure 4.1: Vote Shares of Major Parties in Uttar Pradesh, 1984–1998 Lok Sabha Elections



Sources: 1. David Butler, A. Lahiri and P. Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).
2. Data for the 1998 elections is from 'How They Fared in the Lok Sabha Polls', *The Hindustan Times*, April 2, 1998.

have a friendly government in place for at least part of the elections. MLAs from the Loktantric Congress, which had been supporting the BJP in the state government, supported by MLAs from a variety of different parties, convinced the governor that they should be allowed to form a new government. The swing towards the BJP in the first phase of voting was 1.9 percent, while in the second phase of voting, under the short-lived government of Jagadambika Pal of the Loktantric Congress, the pro-BJP swing was 4.4 percent.[14] This was possibly a sympathy effect, although a post-poll survey indicates a pro-BJP and anti-Congress shift took place nation-wide 'after the first phase of polling'.[15]

The BJP gained ground in some new districts, but lost the symbolic Faizabad seat associated with the Ayodhya movement, where the former Bajrang Dal head, Vinay Katiyar, was the sitting MP. It also lost 14 other seats it had won in 1996. As has been the case in UP since 1991, the BJP benefited from a three-way split in the opposition and the inability of the SP and BSP to forge a lasting alliance. In 41 constituencies won by the BJP and its allies, the combined BSP and SP vote would have defeated the BJP. If one also imagines the Congress as part of an alliance, the BJP would have won only 12 seats in UP, *ceteris paribus*.[16]

The Congress was the major loser in UP, relinquishing all its seats, including the Nehru–Gandhi family seat of Amethi. Congress ally Ajit Singh also lost in his dynastic constituency of Baghpat, once the secure base of his father, former prime minister, Chaudhuri Charan Singh.

Salman Khurshid, the new Uttar Pradesh Congress committee chief, could not even come in second in his constituency, as both he and his party are unpopular with the Muslim community. Congress's vote share fell from 8 percent to 4 percent, casting serious doubts on its ability to resurrect itself as the nationally dominant party as well as on the efficacy of the so-called Sonia effect.

The BSP saw its number of seats drop from six to four, although its vote share increased marginally. The SP made the most significant gains, improving its vote share from 20.84 percent to 28.76, and increasing its number of seats from 16 to 20. It also made inroads in some BJP constituencies, while losing some seats it had held in 1996. The SP has a very narrow constituency, secure only among Muslims and Yadavs, although other backward caste groups do support it. Most Muslims appear to be solidly behind the SP. An exit poll from 1996 reported that 83 percent Muslims supported the JD–SP, while only 5 percent supported the Congress.[17] Similar data has not been made available for 1998, but the JD is now almost a dead item in UP, having won only 0.43 percent of the vote.[18]

Still, in some constituencies, Muslims divided their votes three ways—among the SP, BSP, and Congress. In Rampur constituency, for example, in which Muslims comprise 45 percent of the population, all the candidates, including the winning BJP candidate, were Muslims. The SP came in fourth here, and common wisdom holds that the SP or at least the Congress 'should have won' this constituency, although the BJP had also won here in 1991. Opponents of the BJP claim that the only explanation could be irregularities by the BJP state administration,[19] although there were no such reports of poll rigging during field interviews in this constituency. Rather, interviews indicated that the Congress candidate, who came in second, was very popular, and Muslims had split their votes. I asked about the strategy whereby Muslims try to unite behind the candidate most likely to defeat the BJP, which in most cases would be the SP. In Rampur, responses were that, first, many Muslims voted for the Congress candidate, who appeared likely to win, but, second, Muslims are not so organized as to be able to avoid dividing their votes.

Rampur is a district of interest not only because the SP lost, but because the BJP won with a Muslim candidate. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, a Muslim who was associated with Uma Bharti's Yuva Morcha (and who endured good natured jesting from his Hindu counterparts), was fielded in this district in the hopes that he would draw Muslim votes.

No Muslims appear to have voted for him, contradicting the rumor that some Muslims were voting for the BJP,[20] although it certainly was true that Muslims felt less threatened by Vajpayee than by other BJP leaders. When asked whether the presence of a BJP government at the center made them uneasy, Muslims answered that the coalition nature of the government and the reassuring presence of Vajpayee as prime minister laid such fears to rest, although many certainly felt animosity towards their local BJP party workers and supporters.

Mulayam Singh, known as 'Mullah Mulayam' to his detractors, although he is, of course, a Hindu, is seen as a protector of Muslims. He not only stopped the *kar sewaks* marching towards the Babri Masjid in the aborted first attack of 1990, but has since proposed and implemented a number of pro-Muslim polices. These include the promotion and protection of Urdu, plans to establish an all-Muslim police force, and reservation of a percentage of places for Muslim women in the Women's Reservation Bill just postponed in parliament. Yet, interviews suggest that many Muslims had no particular loyalty to Mulayam Singh, were somewhat nostalgic for the Congress, and would be glad to vote Congress if it had any chance of winning. This is a marked change from 1996, when anger at the Congress for allowing the demolition of the Babri Mosque was almost on par with anger at the BJP, and directed in a personal sense at former prime minister Narasimha Rao. Now that a member of the Gandhi family has reemerged as head of the Congress, there is a definite softening of the anti-Congress stance. When I pointed out to one Muslim in Macchlishahar that it was Rajiv Gandhi who had allowed the gates of the Babri Masjid to be unlocked, he replied that Rajiv Gandhi was young and dependent on his advisers, therefore he should not be held responsible. However, Congress was so weak in UP that its ability to take advantage of such favorable sentiments was very limited.

Muslims, who the BJP claim have not joined Indian society as a whole and who have been further isolated by the BJP's anti-Muslim stance, contradicted this view by their voting behavior. While Muslim leaders, like Shahabuddin and Imam Bukhari of the Jama Masjid in Delhi, vie for the right to speak for the Muslim community, no such single leader is acknowledged by Muslims. Further, while some Muslims place a very high value on symbolic issues such as the promotion of Urdu, others see such questions as secondary to economic development and to joining the wider world by learning English. In fact, one of the most contentious issues, that of the institution of a uniform civil code, raised few protests at the village level. Muslim leaders

assert that Shariat law is one of the bases of their identity, but many villagers see no reason why they should be isolated from the national mainstream by separate laws.[21]

The Muslim village women I spoke to in Rampur had never heard of the debate over the uniform civil code and did not seem aware that Muslims and Hindus had separate civil codes. Once explained to them, they were opposed to the idea of separate codes. These women believed that divorce, particularly the infamous '*talaq*, *talaq*, *talaq*', was too easy for Muslim men and that divorced women were entitled to maintenance. One educated Muslim man from the same village agreed, arguing that his daughters were not in *purda*, and modern Muslims were not bound by all the provisions of the Quran. This same person, however, still considered the BJP an enemy and supported the SP.[22]

The BJP has very consciously attempted to expand its constituency into the backward castes and Scheduled Castes (SC); nation-wide there was a 12 percent swing of the OBC vote towards the BJP and a 5 percent swing of the SC vote.[23] Unfortunately, separate data is not available for UP, although an exit poll from 1996 reports that 38 percent of the OBCs voted BJP and 46 percent voted for the JD–SP.[24] Some backward caste groups have historically been associated with the BJP; Kurmis, for example, were supporters of the erstwhile Jan Sangh.[25] Lodhs have been sought out by the BJP through promotion of Lodh political leaders. According to respondents in one Lodh-dominated village, they voted for the BJP because: (*a*) the BJP had prominent backward caste politicians who were Lodhs, most notably Kalyan Singh, and (*b*) they compete on the local level with the Yadavs, who support Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party. They claimed that they were 'terrorized' by Yadavs when the SP was in power.[26] Their loyalty was explicitly to Kalyan Singh, not to the MP from this district of Farrukhabad, Swami Sakshi Sachidanand, who was also a Lodh.[27]

Sakshiji was, however, identified as a backward caste leader to the extent that Brahmans appeared to have become alienated from their swami MP and have switched their votes to the Congress in Farrukhabad, negating the idea that a sadhu candidate can bridge caste differences and unite Hindus. Further, backward caste politicians within the BJP, most notably Uma Bharti and Swami Sakshiji, take diametrically opposed positions to the standard party line on issues such as reservation for women. It is difficult for the BJP to incorporate backward and Scheduled Caste voters without alienating their secure base among the upper castes.[28]

The BJP *and Scheduled Castes*

The BJP has attempted to incorporate the Scheduled Castes in religious, social, and political ways. The results are mixed, but for the most part unsuccessful. The VHP and BJP argue that the idea of untouchability is an aberration which was brought to India with Muslim invasions. To counteract this putative foreign perversion of Hinduism, as well as to get the numbers to win elections, 'former' or alienated members of the Hindu fold must be reincorporated. Therefore, individuals such as Mahant Avaidyanath, the BJP MP from Gorakhpur, symbolically and publicly oppose the practice of untouchability by personally dining with Dalits. This is intended to protect against possible conversions, and hopefully prevent any temptation to vote for a caste-based party rather than the 'Hindu party'. When Mahant Avaidyanath went to Banaras to eat with the Doms,[29] an act which brought 'tears to the eyes' of the Dom Raja, he was breaking in a radical fashion caste-based food restrictions with the intention of bringing this caste around to supporting the BJP.[30]

This type of missionary work is part of a larger project begun by the VHP in 1979, and marks a break with 'traditional' Hinduism which is non-proselytizing. Galvanized by the Meenakshipuram conversions of 1981, in which an entire Dalit village converted to Islam,[31] the VHP has been involved in programs to counteract conversions to Christianity and Islam. The program involves reaching out, in both symbolic and concrete economic ways, to those previously considered to have an ambiguous position as Hindus; mainly those from low castes and tribals.[32] They also actively work to 'reconvert' adherents of Islam or Christianity, and seek to devalue both these religions in the public eye.[33]

From the political perspective, the BJP makes symbolic gestures towards Dalits, such as supporting Scheduled Caste G. M. C. Balayogi for Lok Sabha speaker, appointing a Dalit, Suraj Bhan, as governor of UP, and 'handing over an ancient fort built by the only Dalit Raja, Bijli Pasi, to the Pasi community'.[34] Their short-lived alliance with the BSP in the UP state government was not only intended to prevent the BSP from uniting with the SP, and of course to gain power, but to counteract the view of the BJP as a solely upper caste party unconcerned with the weaker sections. But the hopes of the BJP to counter its pro-high caste and anti-Dalit reputation, and extend its base of support by making compromises with the Dalit party,[35] were ultimately counter-productive.

When the breach came, Dalit voters remembered only that the BJP had pulled down a BSP government. They did not accord the BJP any credit for initially supporting Mayawati for chief minister, a post she could not have achieved otherwise. Meanwhile, high caste voters were alienated by the pro-Dalit policies of the BSP/BJP government during Mayawati's tenure.

In spite of Dalit loyalty towards the BSP, exceptions can be found where individuals were attracted to the BJP ideology, or Scheduled Caste groups were alienated by the dominance of the Chamars in the BSP, and chose to support the BJP. One Jatav man, whose caste group usually supported the BSP, told me he was voting for the BJP because of the 'Vajpayee wave'. A Scheduled Caste *pradhan* (elected village head) from village Siktor in Gorakhpur, stated that all the *chhota log*, literally the 'small' people, were dividing their votes among the SP and BSP. When pressed, however, as to how she and her husband had voted, she stated reticently that she herself had voted for the BJP because she had heard Swami Avaidyanath, MP candidate from Gorakhpur, speak and she liked what he had said about respect for women. Her husband voted for BJP because he liked Vajpayee and thought he deserved a chance. Almost in passing, he mentioned that the BJP fights for the rights of Hindus with regard to the temple issue.

Solid supporters of the BSP, however, refer to the BJP as 'the Brahmans' and view them as their *dushman* (enemy.) Now that UP has a BJP state government, one group of Chamars in Gorakhpur expected a reversal of the benefits they had received under Mayawati's tenure. These included the allotment of funds for building *pucca* or brick houses for the most disadvantaged, the distribution of food to every school-going child (which is required by law but seldom done except under a BSP government), and the allocation of scholarships to Scheduled Caste children.[36] In another village, Chamars claimed that they had not been allowed to vote during the 1998 elections, as neighboring Thakurs had already voted on their behalf. The Thakurs dominated this village in other ways too. In one instance, they brought in outsiders to work in their fields during a dispute, and literally starved the Chamars into submission. The SP–BSP government of the time had posted police in their village for four months to protect them, which earned their gratitude.

Chamars, in still a third village, this one in Macchlishahar, also considered the BSP to be their sole defender, and argued that it was only during Mayawati's time that children received their allotted grain which

otherwise was fed to the cattle by 'the Brahmans'.[37] This perception that the BJP is the enemy of the *chhota log* demonstrates the failure of the attempt by such VHP/BJP leaders as Avaidyanath to incorporate the low castes. Few Dalits vote for the BJP. Most Scheduled Castes, particularly the Chamars, are solidly behind the BSP,[38] whose vote share has risen phenomenally, from 8.7 percent in 1991 to 20.76 percent in 1998.

Political Sadhus and Religious Mobilization

Even more than in 1996, the BJP in 1998 was attempting to downplay Hindutva issues in order to establish and maintain alliances with different regional parties. The attempt was to move towards the political center and become the obvious party of governance, replacing the Congress in that role. Vajpayee, the BJP's projected prime ministerial candidate, was very explicitly distancing himself from religious mobilization and many BJP candidates were following suit. But one needed only to travel to districts in UP where VHP-affiliated sadhus were the aspiring MPs to hear reports of the type of 'vicious nonsense' which the BJP repudiated at the national level. Whether by conscious design or the inclination of individual sadhus, certain politically-oriented religious specialists were playing on the communal tension in their districts.

The fear that this created within the minority community was exacerbated by the association of certain sadhus with mafia figures, or with the unsolved murders of their opponents. Ram Vilas Vedhanti, for example, owes much of the credit for his electoral victory to the notorious mafia figure Raghuraj Pratap Singh, also known as Raja Bhaiyya. Swami Sakshiji of Farrukhabad, on the other hand, appeared to have lost some support because of the association of his name with criminal behavior—not from being a criminal per se, but from criminal activity directed at one of the BJP's bases of support, the Brahmans.

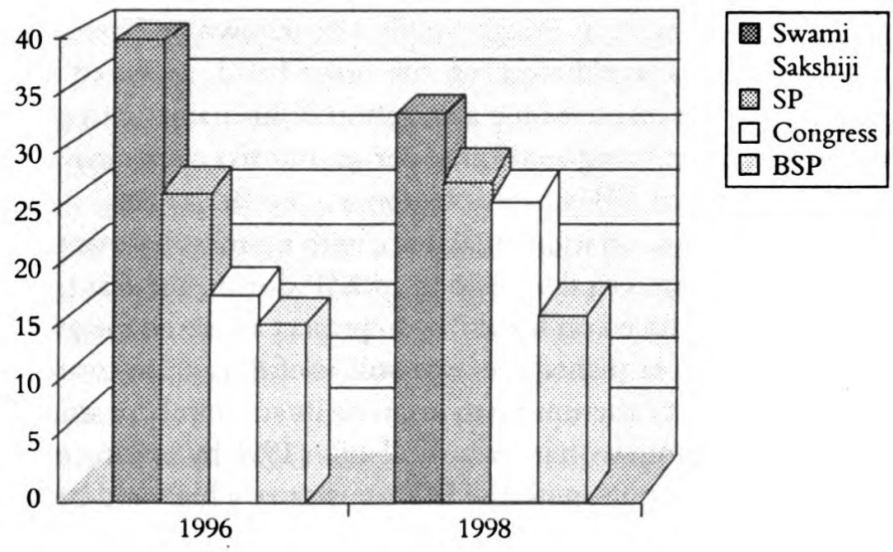
Swami Sakshiji was an individual who, with no mass base or political expertise, was elevated to the position of MP during the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign, based on his ability to project a desired image. Once that image became tarnished, he was still useful as a backward caste 'leader' within a party attempting to improve its support base among the OBCs. Swami Sakshiji won in Farrukhabad in 1996 by uniting his caste group, the Lodhi Rajputs, with the BJP's customary high and backward caste supporters (Brahmans, Vaisyas, Kurmis, and Shakyas),[39] and with

any other voters whom he could incorporate by 'awakening the Hindus' who were being 'terrorized'—his expression—by the Muslim minority in this area.[40]

Shortly before the 1998 elections, Swami Sakshiji was implicated in the murder of Brahma Dutta Dwivedi, a Brahman leader of the BJP in UP and a former minister in Kalyan Singh's first state government. Kalyan Singh's name was also mentioned in the investigation. Although the official inquiry never saw the light of day, the allegation was that Kalyan Singh and Sakshi, as backward caste leaders, did not want a Brahman leader to 'come up'. Dwivedi's widow, Prabhu Dwivedi—who is now a minister in Kalyan Singh's government—along with the 'Brahman lobby' boycotted Advani's visit to Farrukhabad in protest. Further, the Brahman lobby issued a statement before the 1998 General Election that they would withhold their votes from Sakshi and the BJP. (They had issued a similar statement in 1996 asserting that they would vote for the BJP.)

Salman Khurshid was the Congress candidate whom Swami Sakshiji had defeated in 1996, and he was the candidate once again. Some of the Brahman votes may have been transferred to him, since, as is shown in Figure 4.2, Sakshiji's vote share declined precipitously while Khurshid's figure improved. In 1996, Sakshiji defeated the runner-up SP candidate by 84,978 votes; while in 1998 he defeated the SP candidate by only 32,159 votes. Still, voters who had never seen him, knew virtually

Figure 4.2: A Comparison of the Results of the 1996 and 1998 General Elections in Farrukhabad



nothing about him, and were not influenced by the fact that he was a sadhu, supported him on caste and party lines. Paradoxically, this political sadhu MP was reelected on grounds having little or nothing to do with religion.

The Mahants of Gorakhnath Peeth in Gorakhpur

Mahant Adityanath is another sadhu MP associated both with criminality and aggressive Hindu nationalist political mobilization. Adityanath is the third mahant from the wealthy and influential Gorakhnath Peeth to be involved in electoral politics, although both his and his predecessor's political success is most closely related to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. This young and dynamic mahant stepped into the shoes of his guru, the elderly Mahant Avaidyanath, who was the head of the VHP organization in charge of the campaign to build the temple in Ayodhya—the Akhil Bharatiya Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Samiti. Mahant Avaidyanath had won the Lok Sabha elections in 1989, 1991, and 1996. Like Ram Vilas Vedhanti, the mahants were, and are, widely believed to be involved with mafia figures in acquiring votes.

Mahant Avaidyanath's alliance with a local Scheduled Caste politician, Ram Vilas Paswan, who had a criminal background and a fiercely loyal constituency from the Scheduled Castes—a number of whom reported that they voted BJP in 1991 and SP in 1996 in support of Paswan or his memory—helped him in winning the 1991 election with an increase over his margin of victory in 1989. His closest rival in the 1991 elections was Sharda Rawat of the JD. Rawat was killed shortly after the elections, and many believe the mahant had a hand in his murder. Former prime minister, V.P. Singh, in fact, brought these allegations out in parliament itself, for which according to the mahant he was 'punished' by 'God'—referring to V.P. Singh's illness with cancer.[41]

After Paswan and Mahant Avaidyanath had a very public and acrimonious separation, with each threatening the other, Paswan allied with Mulayam Singh. Shortly after Paswan's release from jail, where he had been incarcerated in connection with his service to the SP, he was killed. It was speculated that Mahant Avaidyanath was behind this murder, or at least that he protected those who were. This impression was not diminished by the fiery speeches of the mahant's designated successor, 'Chhota Mahant' Adityanath, in which he claimed that anyone challenging the mahant would meet a similar fate. The police did, in fact, raid the Gorakhnath Math, and FIRs were registered against Adityanath

for allegedly manhandling a Dalit woman and in connection with Paswan's murder. Skeptics, however, argued that the raid was only for show and the police had no intention of confronting the Math.

The 1996 General Election in Gorakhpur was fought between what were perceived as two rival gang leaders: Mahant Avaidyanath and local mafia don Virendra Pratap Shahi, the SP candidate and a former associate of Paswan. In spite of a sympathy wave for Paswan in his home assembly constituency of Maniram, the mahant won again. Shahi was killed after the election by members of a competing gang. The mahants were not accused of this murder, although they certainly seemed to feel that Shahi had gotten his due.

In the 1998 election, Mahant Avaidyanath defered to his much younger and aggressive *chela* (student), Adityanath. His main competition in the election was, again, the SP, which was once more running an undistinguished candidate, although not an infamous one like Virendra Pratap Shahi. The new SP candidate was J. Prasad Nishad, ironically a former disciple of Mahant Avaidyanath and an individual who had lost in four attempts at election to the state legislative assembly. He had run in Pipraich assembly constituency—the constituency now represented by liquor 'baron' Jitendra Kumar (Pappu) Jaiswal—in 1989 as an independent, in 1991 and 1993 as the SP candidate, and in 1996 as the BJP candidate. Nishad explained his party affiliation in 1996 in this way—he wanted to see if there was any place for backwards in the BJP, and decided there was not. The BJP gives the alternative explanation that he was forcibly ejected by the party on charges of being a criminal. Through this candidate, Mulayam Singh was attempting to draw in the Nishads, a caste whose members had been BJP supporters.[42] The BSP had given their ticket to a Yadav, Prahlad Yadav.

In his 1998 campaign speeches, Adityanath was exhorting the public to remember Rawat, Shahi, and Paswan, asserting that those who oppose Gorakhnath Math come to a bad end. And, sure enough, an incident did befall the mahant's protagonists immediately before the election, on February 20, 1998. When a prominent member of the SP left his car to go into a doctor's office, bombs were thrown into the car. He escaped uninjured, but his private bodyguard was killed. Nearby police shot two assailants immediately, and two others were killed later. The BJP claims that the SP killed their own man in an attempt to postpone an election they were sure to lose.[43] The SP claims the assailants were BJP workers also seeking to postpone an election the latter knew *they* would lose.[44] The additional district magistrate in charge of the

investigation claimed, as one would expect, that this was simply a law and order problem associated with known criminals and had nothing to do with politics.[45] Of interest here is the ease with which the mahants are believed to be involved in a violent incident to gain electoral advantage.

While there is no way of knowing if Adityanath was involved in this incident, he was directly involved in another incident designed to create a communal divide and to intimidate his opponents. During the 1998 election, polling dates were staggered, as is customary, to ensure the most efficient use of peace keeping forces. In UP, before the second phase of the election, which was scheduled for February 22, a political maneuver was staged in which the Loktantric Congress was able to form a new state administration.

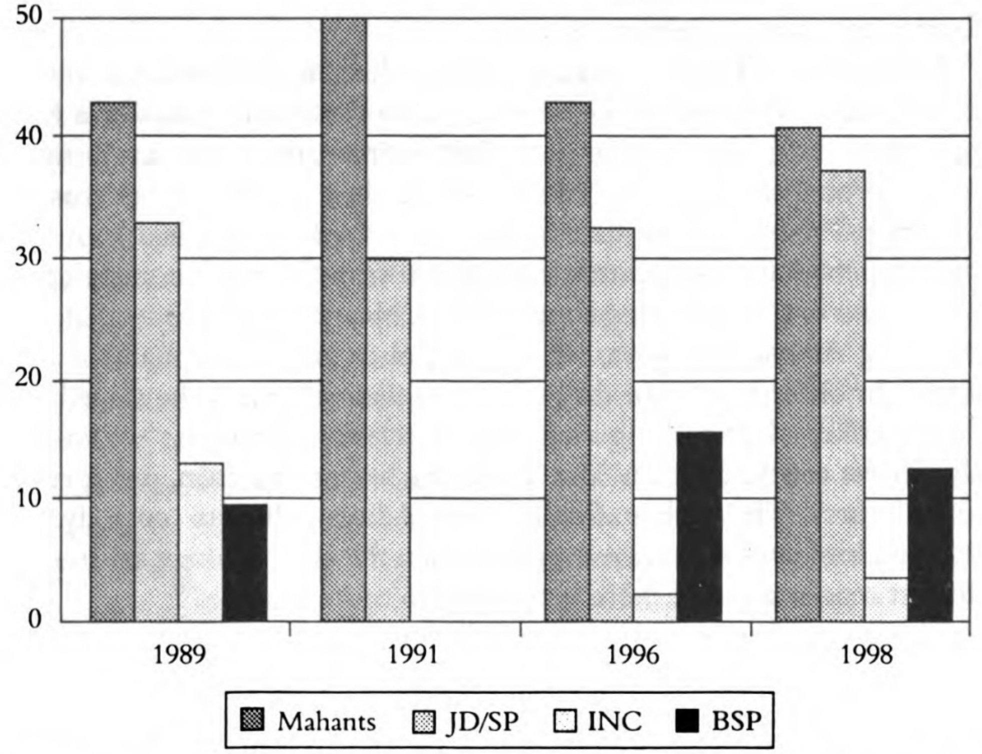
Immediately after the creation of this ultimately short-lived interim government, Vajpayee declared a fast-unto-death and a *bandh* (a business shut down) was declared in UP. Adityanath joined an 'enforcement' procession through town. When they arrived in a Muslim-dominated market, they discovered that some Muslims had kept their shops open. Adityanath himself got down from his vehicle and slapped one or two of the offending shop owners. Nearby Muslims retaliated by attacking Adityanath, who, when the police arrived, demanded their arrest. In order to ensure this, he sat on *dharna*, that is, he staged a sit down strike, while making such provocative statements as: 'we will not allow *them* to stay in India' and 'I will teach them a lesson, just give me four hours'. The police finally took Adityanath into custody, but released him later that same evening when the elder mahant assured the district magistrate that there would be no more trouble.[46]

This was a clear attempt to exacerbate a communal divide. Although Avaidyanath (Adityanath's predecessor) spoke pejoratively of Muslims and was one of the accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case, actually assaulting Muslims in their own neighborhood definitely ratchets up the tension and violates an unspoken agreement to coexist peacefully. In fact, Mahant Avaidyanath represented the Muslim-majority constituency of Maniram as MLA for many years. Although historically some Muslims have actually been associated with the Gorakhnath yogis, the Math has promoted Hindu nationalist politics, including its anti-Muslim subtext, since colonial days. Still, Gorakhpur has not been a communally sensitive area.

In 1991, Mahant Avaidyanath won by 91,359 votes. In 1996, he won by 56,880 votes. Mahant Adityanath secured his victory in 1998 with a margin of 26,206 votes. He attributes this erosion of support to a fraud perpetrated during the second phase of voting when residents of

Maniram had 'their own government',[47] but interviews in Maniram indicate that people voted freely. Also, Mahant Adityanath drew more votes from Maniram in this election than Avaidyanath had in the previous election in 1996—38.7 percent as compared to 37.8 percent.[48] Others, in fact, assert that Adityanath only won through vote rigging in Gorakhpur Sadar constituency. What is clear, however, is that the mahant's popularity is waning despite his increasingly strident appeals to religious identity (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Vote Share by Percentage for the Major Parties in Gorakhpur



Sources: 1. David Butler, A. Lahiri and P. Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).
2. Data for the 1998 elections is from the elections results in the ADM's office in Gorakhpur.

Swami Chinmayanand and Swami Ram Vilas Vedhanti: Development versus Hindutva

Two political sadhus contested from adjoining constituencies in the 1998 election: Swami Ram Vilas Vedhanti in Pratapgarh and Swami Chinmayanand in Macchlishahar. Swami Chinmayanand had joined a

political party and a political campaign for the first time in 1991 as one of the VHP sadhus incorporated by the BJP at that time. He was then sent to the undeveloped district of Badaun to contest against Congressman Saleem Sherwani, a wealthy industrialist from a prominent Allahabad family, and the 'Messiah of Mandal', Sharad Yadav, a major figure in the Janata Dal. Yadav was the sitting MP, while Sherwani had won from that district in 1984 and was to come back to win again in 1996 (and subsequently in 1998). Chinmayanand states that he talked little of Ram Janmabhoomi while campaigning, but instead spoke of economic development, Ram Rajya, and Gandhi. 'I told them Gandhi was Mahatma and I am Mahatma'.[49] He carried the district, in an election that saw a 24.8 percent swing in favor of the BJP, and a 10.4 percent swing against the JD of Sharad Yadav, who was the runner-up.

For the 1996 General Election, Chinmayanand was moved to Shahjahanpur, where one of his ashrams is located. He came in third after the Congress and SP candidates, demonstrating again that the election of a sadhu, even one who was well known both locally and nationally, could not be guaranteed.[50] After his defeat, he continued to nurture his constituencies of Badaun and Shahjahanpur, but, in spite of these efforts, he was given an entirely new district for the 1998 General Election—Macchlishahar. This constituency in central UP is almost entirely rural with no town or city of note, and is cobbled together with assembly segments from two districts—60 percent from Jaunpur and 40 percent from Pratapgarh.

The sitting MP from Macchlishahar was Swami Ram Vilas Vedhanti, a VHP-affiliated sadhu from Ayodhya, who had won his first political contest in 1996 and had subsequently been moved to the neighboring constituency of Pratapgarh. During field interviews with village residents in both constituencies, a question about either swami would inevitably elicit a comparison between the two, in which Swami Chinmayanand would fare better. Vedhanti was extremely unpopular because of his polarizing communal stance. He reportedly made statements during his tenure as MP and during the 1996 and 1998 General Elections to the effect of: 'I do not want votes from those who eat meat or drink alcohol (a category which could certainly include Hindus as well, particularly low caste Hindus, but was directed at Muslims), because I would have to purify the votes before I could use them'. He also reportedly directly stated that he would not do any developmental work in Muslim areas. The district magistrate, who had himself threatened to report Vedhanti to the election commission, since this type of

communal appeal could disqualify his candidacy, confirmed such statements. In contrast, Chinmayanand asked for votes in the name of development, insisting that his saffron robes convey all he needs to say about Hindutva.[51]

Further, Vedhanti was unpopular because of his alliance with Raja Bhaiyya, a local mafia don recently appointed minister of program implementation in the state government as a reward for supporting Kalyan Singh during the vote of confidence which saved his administration. In spite of Vedhanti's contention that Raja Bhaiyya functioned as an equalizing force against the Congress 'enforcer', Pramod Tiwari, Raja Bhaiyya was particularly infamous. Muslims were terrified of him. Several informants contended that some Muslims who voted were later beaten up to intimidate them, although one can only assume that in the 1996 election, when Raja Bhaiyya supported the JD, Muslims were encouraged to vote.

Two versions were told concerning why Vedhanti was shifted to Pratapgarh; both involved his relationship with Raja Bhaiyya. The first story goes that Vedhanti is Raja Bhaiyya's father's personal guru, and so Raja Bhaiyya wanted him in Pratapgarh. The second goes that the VHP struck a deal with Raja Bhaiyya, that if he supported their MP candidate, they would support his man in the assembly election. In both versions, his electoral success was closely tied to Raja Bhaiyya's support. On the other hand, Swami Chinmayanand had no such association. While Raja Bhaiyya offered several times to assist him in his election, Chinmayanand did not think he needed, and was not willing to accept, that type of help.

The Election of Vedhanti: It Takes a Thug

So how did a person like Vedhanti, who was expected to lose had he contested in Macchlishahar, manage to win by 68,465 votes in Pratapgarh? First, there was a BJP/Vajpayee wave. Even Muslims who would never vote for the BJP spoke highly of Vajpayee. Second, there was a cooperative district administration in place. Kalyan Singh transferred the superintendent of police, Jasvir Singh, who actually challenged Raja Bhaiyya by attempting to investigate allegations that the latter had tried to have the Congress candidate poisoned and by harassing and arresting Raja Bhaiyya's men.[52] Third, the anti-BJP vote was split because three Rajas representing the three dominant families of the district contested: Raja Bhaiyya (with Vedhanti the actual candidate), Rajkumari Ratna Singh, and her relative, Abhai Pratap Singh.

Kumari Ratna was the daughter of the highly regarded Dinesh Singh, the Raja of Kalakankar, who had been external affairs minister and MP from this district four times. In this constituency, unlike most others in UP, the Muslim vote was divided. Since Ratna Singh, the sitting MP and Congress candidate, was quite popular and seemed to have a chance to win, some Muslims voted for her. (It was however alleged that it was only through vote rigging that Ratna Singh had won in 1996; she gained a disproportionate share of her votes from her home constituency of Rampur Khas.)

The SP candidate who would be expected to garner all the Muslim votes was perceived to have struck a deal with the Congress not to campaign too hard. Abhai Pratap Singh then 'lost the faith of the minorities' who were also suspicious of his ideological affiliation. He claims the suspicions were unjustified, although as a former Congressman who switched back and forth between the Congress and the JD/SP and as a 'feudal lord' who lives in a grand colonial-style estate surrounded by the poverty stricken homes of ordinary people, it would be difficult to fault the minorities for wondering if he could truly represent them. Singh asserts that the backwards were not allowed to vote, which explains his defeat along with the fact that he was misperceived by 'the minorities'.[53] Also, unlike in other constituencies, in an election where even the Amethi constituency, identified with the Gandhi family, did not return the Congress candidate, some Brahmans still voted for the Congress because of the standing of Ratna Singh's family. Therefore, the real contest was between the BJP and the Congress, in contrast to most of UP where the BJP's strongest opponent was the SP. Had the SP and Congress combined forces they would have defeated the BJP.

Conclusion

In his work on the rise of the Christian Democratic Parties in Europe, Kalyvas describes the tensions inherent in a religio-political movement involving a 'temporary coalition of church and conservative parties'. This is one way of conceptualizing the relationship between the VHP and the BJP, since VHP leaders continue to assert that their support for the BJP remains conditional. Of course, differences exist with Kalyvas's model of church and political party alliances, because the BJP and the VHP have the same parent body—the RSS—and all members together can manufacture their own 'religious leaders'—there is no independent

'church'. Still, Kalyvas's argument that in such a relationship religious specialists are in charge of mass mobilization while the political party controls organization and structure is relevant.[54] Some VHP sadhus, such as Swami Chinmayanand, Uma Bharti, and the Gorakhnath mahants, fulfill both these roles, active in formulating strategies and setting agendas with the goal of increasing the party's base of support. Yet, when Vam Dev suggested that the constitution should be reviewed by religious leaders, Advani was quick to admonish him and declare that the BJP would deal with policy.[55]

Kalyvas further argues that in an alliance between religious specialists and a political party, there is ongoing tension between the religious and political wings. While the party wants to water down the definition of what constitutes religion in order to maximize the number of supporters and to attract alliance partners, religious leaders want to maintain the purity of their message. The end result in Europe during the formation of the Christian democratic parties was that the priests, who had originally become political actors as the 'natural spokesmen of the Catholics', were eventually sidelined—not without protests from the priests.[56] This type of interchange can clearly be seen in the ongoing tension between the VHP and the BJP. The latter, at the national level at least, would prefer the temple issue to quietly go away in spite of the huge electoral gains which it made by championing it (particularly if it can still use this conflict at the district level), while the former consider the temple part of their reward for supporting the BJP.

Religious leaders, however, who owe their political presence to the movement are not adverse to changing their message to continue to be effective in mobilization. They can still be useful, since the BJP strategically uses a strong Hindu nationalist message in one forum, while finessing such a position in another. Since the BJP can be described as a communal party and not a fundamentalist party, that is, customs and events are interpreted and analyzed through a Hindu vs. Muslim framework rather than any desire to return to some 'orthodoxy', and since Hinduism has no canon to which individuals must conform, Hindu nationalism can, within certain limits, interpret Hinduism to suit the social and political needs of the times. What would have been, and have been, defined as core beliefs of Hinduism—the opposition of purity and pollution with regard to the caste system, the role of women, and the non-proselytizing nature of Hinduism—are all being reinterpreted in the light of a politicized Hinduism and the need for numbers of voters.[57]

The tactic of fielding political sadhus as symbols of Hindutva is part of the invocation of religion in political mobilization but, quite paradoxically, when examined at the district level, the appeal of sadhus lies in other than their religious aura. It is also somewhat ironic that the 'moderate' Vajpayee is the popular face of the BJP, in contrast to sadhus using virulent Hindutva appeals, whose popularity is waning. Individual voters support, or do not support, sadhus contesting in their districts for a number of different reasons aside from religiosity or 'primordial attachment', even though political strategists continue to insist that these are major factors. Opponents believe sadhus have an 'unfair advantage' as police and public officials touch the sadhu candidate's feet in a symbol of respect. However, when voters were asked why they voted for a particular sadhu, the reasons given included: it was a vote for the party, a vote for Vajpayee, a caste-based vote, or a protest vote against another political party. Few would claim that they were voting for a religious personality.

Further, the view held by those who favor the involvement of religious individuals in politics, which asserts that religious leaders were motivated by ideology in face of pseudo-secular threats and virtually compelled to enter politics by such events as the Meenakshipuram conversions or Mulayam Singh's strong arm tactics against the *kar sewaks* in Ayodhya, is not a credible explanation for the entirety of this phenomenon. While certain political sadhus, such as the mahants of Gorakhpur and Swami Chinmayanand, have been able to draw on the resources of an institutionalized religious center, a number of sadhu MPs, such as Swami Sakhshiji, have been creations of the VHP/RSS/BJP with no independent base. Clearly, politics offers an alternate route to a profitable and influential career for those sadhus lacking in an affiliation with a prestigious religious institution, or looking for more of a challenge than offered by the 'traditional' religious role. It is also clear that the more sadhus become involved in political activities, the less religious credibility they have.

Notes and References

1. Majority of the data in this article came from fieldwork carried out immediately following the 1998 election in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and supplemented by fieldwork done during the 1996 election campaign in UP and Madhya Pradesh (MP). I would like to thank Paul Wallace for including me in this project and Paul R. Brass for his

advice, support, and encouragement. I am also indebted to the many individuals in India who took the time to speak with me, and especially to my research associate, Rakesh K. Jaiswal.

2. Tavleen Singh, 'Viewpoint: United Affront', *India Today*, March 16, 1998, p. 47.
3. Representative of comments made by Ram Vilas Vedhanti during the campaign, according to villagers in Macchlishahar and the district magistrate of Pratapgarh who threatened to lodge a formal complaint with the election commission. Interviews in Pratapgarh and neighboring Macchlishahar, April 1, 1998.
4. Yogendra Yadav and Alistair McMillan, 'Results: How India Voted', *India Today*, March 16, 1998, p. 29.
5. Swapan Das Gupta and Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, 'Crown of Thorns', *India Today*, March 16, 1998, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
7. 'Advani Reiterates Resolve to Build Ram Temple', *The Hindu*, February 7, 1998, cited in S.P. Udayakumar, 'Ayodhya: The "Ram Temple" Drama', *Frontline*, Vol. 15, No. 15, July 18–31, 1998, on-line edition.
8. 'Vajpayee Says Government Will Go by Court Order', *The Hindu*, June 8, 1998, on-line edition.
9. Personal interview with Giriraj Kishore at the VHP headquarters in Delhi, Sankat Mochan Ashram, March 28, 1998.
10. *The Hindu* (Note 8 above); and 'November 2001: VHP Sets Muhurat', *Deccan Chronicle*, July 18, 1998.
11. See Jack Llewelyn's interview with Swami Chinmayanand, 'Chinmayanand: Kumbh Mela Leaders', and his account of the public meeting attended by Chinmayanand, Advani, and Kalyan Singh, 'A Meeting to Honor the Sants: A Kumbh Mela Event', from his website posted from the Kumbh Mela, Hardwar, 1998. Address: http://www.smsu.edu/contrib/relst/kumbhmela.html/.
12. See Harold A. Gould, *Grassroots Politics in India: A Century of Political Evolution in Faizabad District* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1994), for an argument that the ideology of Nehruvian secularism at the national level was often countermanded by deliberate appeals to 'primordial' sentiments at the district level by the Congress. Gould has demonstrated how, even in the years immediately after independence, the Congress manipulated systems of patronage and loyalty to sub-national groups.
13. Paul R. Brass, 'General Elections, 1996 in Uttar Pradesh: Divisive Struggles Influence Outcome', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 20, 1997, p. 2420.
14. See Note 4 above, p. 31.
15. Yogendra Yadav, Alistair McMillan and Kanchan Chandra, 'Post-Poll: Who Voted for Who?', *India Today*, March 16, 1998.
16. Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, 'Elections '98: Messages From the States', *Frontline*, Vol. 15, No. 6, March 21–April 3, 1998, on-line edition.
17. Yogendra Yadav, 'Exit Poll: Who Voted Whom', *India Today*, May 31, 1996.
18. 'How They Fared in Lok Sabha Polls', *The Hindustan Times*, April 2, 1998.
19. Ramakrishnan, 'Elections '98' (Note 16 above), p. 4.
20. BJP leaders insist that some Muslims do vote for the BJP but will not admit it. Yogendra Yadav of CSDS confirmed with me in a telephone conversation that there were some Muslims voting BJP in certain areas, but few, and probably a negligible number in communally polarized states such as UP.

21. Interviews with Muslims in Rampur district, April 6, 1998.
22. *Ibid.* There are of course many Muslims who consider such issues as the status of Urdu to be extremely important. One Muslim man stated that, if you want to destroy a person and his culture, take away his language. Interview in a Muslim-dominated village in Macchlishahar, April 1998.
23. Yadav and McMillan, 'Results: How India Voted' (Note 4 above), p. 34.
24. Yadav, 'Exit Poll: Who Voted Whom' (Note 17 above), pp. 25–27. A further fragmentation of the backward caste vote may be forthcoming. A man representing himself as a Patel, which is a name taken by Kurmis, stated that 'they' have founded their own party, aptly named *Apna Dal* ('my' or 'our own' party). 'We once voted for Mulayam but he only represents Muslims', this individual commented. Since Kurmis are often supporters of the BJP, it is unclear how many Kurmis vote for this party, or which party's votes this will affect. Interview in village Macchlishahar, April 1, 1998. In Machhlishahar, the Apna Dal candidate came in fourth with 5.5 percent of the vote.
25. Brass, 'General Elections' (Note 13 above), p. 2405.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 2413–14.
27. Interview with villagers in a Lodh-dominated village, Farrukhabad, March 30, 1998.
28. Cf. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
29. Doms are one of the lowest and most ritually impure castes whose traditional occupation was disposal of the ashes of cremated bodies.
30. Interview with Mahant Avaidyanath in Gorakhpur, July 31, 1995.
31. George Mathew, 'Politicization of Religion; Conversions to Islam in Tamil Nadu,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 26, 1982, Parts II and III, p. 1071.
32. Tulsi Ram Sharma, 'Dharmacharyas Plunge into Social Action', *The Hindu World*, Vol. 25, No. 12, August 1990, p. 68.
33. An example of this 'devaluing' strategy is the proclamation made by the Delhi government that Christian churches would be taken off the list of religious places because wine is served on the premises. An outcry came from the opposition, along with Catholic priests, who insisted that this allegation was disingenuous of the BJP as they, along with everyone else, understood the distinction between the ritual use of wine associated with the blood of Jesus and a drinking establishment. Prime Minister Vajpayee rose to the occasion and insisted that such a move would not be implemented and the BJP respected all religions. This also had an economic component as the Delhi government wanted to issue licenses to bars near churches—licenses for which they could levy fees or bribes. This act would only be legal if churches were no longer considered religious sites. *The Hindu*, July 1–3, 1998, on-line edition.
34. Sharat Pradhan, 'BJP's Overtures to Dalits Drive Mayawati Round the Bend', *Rediff on the Net*, June 2, 1998, on-line edition.
35. Smita Gupta, 'Why the VHP had to Backtrack', *The Times of India* (New Delhi), August 17, 1995; 'Mathura Authorities Expect No Trouble', *The Times of India* (New Delhi), August 18, 1995, p. 7; and personal interviews with BJP/RSS workers in Mathura, September 5–6, 1995.
36. Interviews in Maniram assembly constituency of Gorakhpur, April 3, 1998.
37. Interview in a Chamar village in Macchlishahar, April 1, 1998.
38. Interviews in a number of villages across UP during the 1998 General Election, March 30 to April 6, 1998.

39. Prasannan, R. and Debashish Mukerji, 'Caste Conundrum', *The Week*, May 5, 1996, p. 30; and 'Jatiya Chakravyuha me Salmaan Ghire', *Amar Ujala*, May 2, 1996, p. 8.
40. Interview with Sakshiji Maharaja at the BJP headquarters in Farrukhabad, May 6, 1996. Sakshiji stated that he was brought to Farrukhabad because it was a difficult district which had remained with the Congress even during the Hindutva wave of 1991 and so he was the man seen as able to win for the BJP.
41. Sunita Aron, 'Avaidnath (sic) in the Soup Again', *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), April 20, 1996, p. 7.
42. Interview at SP headquarters in Gorakhpur, April 3, 1998.
43. Interview with Mahant Adityanath, Delhi, March 29, 1998. The BJP claims that the gun recovered by the police was traced to the candidate himself.
44. Interview with Dr. Mohsin, district president of the Samajwadi Party, Gorakhpur, April 3, 1998.
45. Interview with government official, Gorakhpur, April 3, 1998.
46. This incident was related to me by both a journalist and a government official. Versions vary slightly.
47. Interview with Mahant Adityanath in Delhi, March 29, 1998.
48. Constituency level figures up to and including 1996 are from David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995* (Updated for 1996) (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1996). Figures for 1998 are from the Indian government election results available in the ADM's office, Gorakhpur, and from the Election Commission statistical tables, available on the internet at http://www.eci.gov.in.
49. While the BJP at the national strategy level repudiates Gandhi for his pacifist and pro-Muslim views, some BJP candidates at the district level are not at all adverse to garlanding posters of Gandhi at political meetings.
50. Although Swami Chinmayanand himself attributes his defeat to election fraud.
51. Interview with Swami Chinmayanand at Parmath Ashram in Hardwar, April 7, 1998.
52. Information from interviews in Pratapgarh, and 'When "Dons" Become Ministers, Upright Cops May Land in Jail', *The Times of India* (Lucknow), June 28, 1998.
53. Interviews with SP candidate Abhai Pratap Singh, and a government official in Pratapgarh, April 1, 1998.
54. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 259–61.
55. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (Note 28 above), p. 484.
56. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy* (Note 54 above), pp. 23–24.
57. Cf. Amrita Basu, 'Feminism Inverted', in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds), *Woman and the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995), pp. 170–71.

5

Split the Votes and Win the Election: An Analysis of the 12th Lok Sabha Election in Bihar

Binoy Shanker Prasad

Setting the Scene

Contrary to the impression that the state of Bihar is impervious to change, at least the political landscape has changed considerably during the two years between the 11th and the 12th General Elections to the Lok Sabha. Laloo Yadav installed his wife Rabri Devi as the successor chief minister of Bihar while he underwent judicial detention on the charges related to the fodder scandal. After the split of the Janata Dal, Laloo Yadav, also the president of the joint Janata Dal, had broken away from the party and formed the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The state level organization of the Janata Dal was, thus, without the biggest vote-catcher on their side.[1] Jagannath Mishra, a former chief minister of Bihar, left the Congress with his followers to set up a parallel Bihar Jan Congress. He didn't see a future for himself in the Congress politics of Bihar with Sitaram Kesri, a Bihari, at the helm of the Indian National Congress and his alliance with Laloo Yadav. Another former Brahman Congress chief minister of Bihar, Bhagwat Jha Azad, left the Congress to join the BJP.

With the announcement of the 12th General Election to the Lok Sabha, therefore, different political parties and personalities positioned themselves for the contest. A realignment of political and social forces was set in motion. While the communist parties broke their alliance with Laloo to help keep the United Front and the Janata Dal (JD) intact, Laloo's party entered into an alliance with the Congress and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). Desertions from the Congress had begun in Bihar as anywhere else before Sonia's entry to actively campaign for the Congress. For instance, Ms Krishna Sahi, the only Congress MP from Bihar (Begusarai) in 1991 and a union minister in P.V. Narasimha Rao's government, quit the Congress to join the Samata Party. The move was apparently to ensure the non-Yadav Other Backward Caste (OBC) votes under the Samata Party's influence while retaining the support of her own forward caste, the Bhumihars. At another level, Laloo sought to strengthen his alliance with the Rajputs and won them over to his coalition of Muslims and Yadavs.

In addition, several other regional parties and leaders extended interest in Bihar possibly to establish national recognition. Leading among them were Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party) and Chandrashekhar (Samajwadi Janata Party) from Uttar Pradesh, Ramakrishna Hegde (Lok Shakthi) from Karnataka and Shankar Sinh Vaghela (Rashtriya Janata Party) from Gujarat.

Alliance Making

Laloo Yadav worked out an alliance system which included the Congress (I), the JMM (S), the Samajwadi Janata Party (Chandrashekhar), and the Rashtriya Janata Party (Shankar Sinh Vaghela). The JMM (S) and the Congress (I) were, thus, in alliance of some sort. Laloo tried to include the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in this alliance system as well. Out of jail on bail, he had a conference with Kanshi Ram, the BSP chief, and launched a joint front, the Jan Morcha, against the BJP.[2] But the Morcha proposal ran into difficulties and could not formalize. With the BSP, Laloo was willing to let Kanshi Ram nominate only one candidate in a constituency of Bihar. But Kanshi Ram was not in favor of the RJD putting up a single candidate in Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier, he had attempted to forge a broad anti-BJP electoral front, including the constituents of the United Front. However, he received a cold response from the Janata Dal and the Left parties.[3] The Left parties

accused him of having 'weakened' the unity of secular forces by splitting the Janata Dal.[4] The Janata Dal and the Left parties calculated that politically Laloo, involved deeply in the fodder scam enquiry and having been removed from the presidentship of the national Janata Dal, was almost a spent force. On the other hand, RJD leaders considered the Left parties as 'electorally irrelevant in Bihar'.[5] The election results later proved the RJD leaders right. Squabbling among the political allies and Laloo's kin, and revival of the Congress party under Sonia's leadership were also factors in the way of Laloo's efforts at building an alliance against the BJP.[6]

Laloo tried to mediate between the Congress and the JMM who individually realized the importance of coming together. But they were unable to leave their animosities behind. Each staked claim to a larger share of seats.

The Sonia factor had its impact on the wonderful equation between Laloo and Sitaram Kesri. Laloo had been trying to keep the Congress in good humor for supporting the state government led by his wife, Rabri Devi. The Congress Party, thus far in shambles, was suddenly revived as Sonia infused enthusiasm in the state party organization. She asked for more seats than the 12 earmarked for the Congress by Laloo. The proposed alliance between the Congress and the RJD came in for criticism from a few national Congress leaders. They apparently did not like the idea of according the status of big brother to Laloo in Bihar.

Eventually, three broad alliances, each led by the BJP, the RJD, and the constituents of the Janata Dal were forged before the election. Only the BJP–Samata alliance had the desired cohesion. In the RJD-led group, which included the JMM (S) and the Congress, seat adjustments could be made at a limited number of places only. The United Front constituents, mainly the Janata Dal and the Left parties, also fell short of presenting a determined united face. The JD decided to enter into an alliance with the splinter group of the Congress, the Bihar Jan Congress (BJC), led by Jagannath Mishra over the objections of the state party president Ramai Ram who had at one time threatened to form a new party.

Fielding Candidates

The RJD decided to contest 38 seats with its own party candidates, leaving 16 seats to its alliance partners—the Congress and the Jan Morcha

allies. Out of the 38 seats the RJD contested, caste-wise distribution of party tickets for non-reserved constituencies was as follows: Yadav (14), Muslims (5), Koeri (5), Rajput (4), Kurmi (1), Vaishya (1), and Nishad (1). Thus, such upper castes as Bhumihars, Brahmans and Kayasthas did not get representation in the RJD's list at all.[7] These three castes were calling all the shots during the general elections up until 1962 and later in 1971. The RJD left Maharajganj and Hajipur to the SJP (Chandrashekhar)[8] and Sheohar to the RJP (Vaghela).

The BJP–Samata alliance did give representation to the castes not appearing on the RJD list. For example, in the BJP list of candidates for open constituencies, there were about five Brahmans, two Kayasthas, one Bhumihar, eight Other Backward Castes (including two Yadavs and four Banias), one tribal, and one Muslim. Unlike in Uttar Pradesh where the Vaishyas are considered members of the forward castes, in Bihar the Vaishyas are categorized as backward castes.

The Samata Party is regarded as the party of non-Yadav OBCs, especially of the Koeris–Kurmis. Whereas it is apparent that there was no Yadav in the Samata list of about 19 unreserved constituencies, it was not dominated by the Koeris–Kurmis either. There were as many as eight Rajputs, two Muslims, one Christian, and two Bhumihars. From the list of candidates political parties offered to the electorate, it is quite clear that the Yadavs from the OBC category and Rajputs from the group of upper castes were the favored ones for all parties. In addition to numerical solidarity, these two social groups have been consistently aggressive at mobilizing and exercising their resources, particularly muscle power at the polling stations.

Contest

The main contest was between the BJP–Samata alliance and the RJD-led grouping. Thirty-two of the 54 Lok Sabha constituencies were contested by the BJP, leaving the remaining 22 for its ally, the Samata Party. In 1996, Laloo's JD and the communists had secured 26 and the BJP–Samata combine had won 24 seats. In the southern part of Bihar, the BJP had won 12 out of the 14 Lok Sabha seats. The Congress and the JMM had claimed one seat each. BJP made inroads into this region because of the crusading work of the RSS cadres under the *Vananchal* project. Laloo's Janata Dal didn't have an alliance with any party in south Bihar nor a seat.

How did the Parties Fare?

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The Lok Sabha result in Patna brought up the total number of BJP MPs from Bihar to 20, and with the 10 MPs of the Samata Party (SAP), the alliance secured a decisive lead of 30 out of a total of 54 seats. This number was against the Rashtriya Janata Dal (17 seats), the Congress I (five seats), the Rashtriya Janata Party (one seat), and the Janata Dal (one seat). In 1996, the BJP and the Samata Party had 18 and six seats each. Thus, they added two and four seats to their previous number.

According to several analyses, the performance of the BJP in the north including Bihar was anything but outstanding. For example, nationally, the BJP could add a mere 18 seats to its 1996 number, despite alignments and alliances. Along with its alliance partners it had 253 MPs in the Lok Sabha or roughly 36 percent of the vote. The BJP's vote share, according to an assessment, was around one-fourth.[9]

Thus, every two-thirds of the electorate who exercised their voting rights were against the BJP. The BJP always claimed high moral ground in Indian politics. But it also offered nominations to 'history sheeters' and persons 'chargesheeted by the CBI in corruption cases'.[10] In the sections of this essay where constituency-wise analysis has been undertaken, we will see how the BJP fared along with other parties.

Indian National Congress (I)

In alliance with the RJD, the Congress (I) won five seats in Bihar, three more than its number in 1996. In 1996, it had doubled its number of one secured in 1991. Rajmahal (ST), a reserved parliamentary constituency, was added in 1996. The five seats won this time around, however, did not include Rajmahal. The Congress lost Rajmahal to the BJP by only nine votes, a significant record by itself.

In the eight constituencies left by Laloo, the Congress derived maximum electoral dividend from its alliance with the RJD. In as many as five of the eight seats—Madhubani, Katihar, Lohardagga, Singhbhum, and Begusarai—the Congress came out victorious. This confirmed a trend. In elections where there was no wave in favor or against any political party, a major political party could pick up a few more seats in alliance with the regional parties. In that sense, just as the BJP benefited

from its alliance with the Samata Party in Bihar, the Congress was helped by its electoral arrangement with the RJD.

Interestingly, the credit for the success of the Congress also went to Laloo because the Congress (I) leadership, both at the center and at the state, was of little help. In 1996, both in Katihar and Rajmahal (ST), the Congress candidates won on their own strength.

The Congress (I) had its candidates in 21 constituencies. In 13 constituencies outside the alliance system, the Congress performance was very poor. Only in two constituencies in the north (Maharajganj and Purnea) and two constituencies in the south (Khunti and Kodarma) was the Congress able to secure a respectable 100,000+ votes on its own. In the rest of the constituencies, the Congress was hardly a preference for the electorate. In seven constituencies, the party had less than 10,000 votes, with the lowest being 2,215 in Bagaha.[11]

In Saharsa and Jhanjharpur constituencies, the RJD and the Congress reportedly had an understanding to let the Congress (I) candidates stay in the race possibly to split the upper caste support for the BJP and facilitate the candidacy of the RJD.[12] This strategy apparently worked and the RJD candidates won. An electoral maneuver of this nature should alter the general perception that there was always a permanent divide between the forward and backward castes.

Fielding a number of weak candidates, however, brought the Congress (I)'s vote percentage in the state to an all time low. In 50 years of post-independence electoral history in Bihar, the Congress (I) secured just over 7 percent of the votes. Already, in 1996, the Congress had touched its new low of 11.26 in terms of its percentage share.

It is, thus, important to assess the impact of the 'Sonia factor' in Bihar. The prospect of the Congress (I) candidates in Saharsa, Purnea or Maharajganj, or in Khunti or Kodarma, did not improve by the Sonia factor where the party did rather well on its own strength. Her campaign in the tribal belt of south Bihar did not help the Congress (I) either. There, the Congress could have counted on her being a Christian. Many Christian missionaries are active in this area. So much so, the Congress (I) could not even retain its 1996 seat, Rajmahal (ST), despite Sonia's assurances in her election speeches of a separate state of Jharkhand.

The Congress (I) in Bihar was further weakened because some of its leaders had left the party. However, desertions from the party didn't make any substantial electoral impact. Out of several candidates sponsored by the Bihar Jan Congress, only one candidate could secure a

respectable 87,478 votes. A former union minister and one time undisputed leader of the Yadavs in Bihar, Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, was a partner of Jagannath Mishra in floating the BJC. He was pushed to the fourth position in Arrah, polling 24,886 votes only.

The Left Parties

Deprived of Laloo's support in 1998, the communist parties suffered the worst defeat in over four decades since 1957.[13] They were wiped out for the second time in 21 years. The last time the CPI suffered a complete rout was in 1977 for its association with the Congress during the national emergency and its subsequent electoral alliance with the Congress.

In 1998, the joint share of votes of the two communist parties dropped drastically to below 4 percent in the state. Whereas Balia was taken away from the CPI by the RJD, in Madhubani, the RJD's support to the Congress helped its candidate, Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, win over a CPI candidate. The high profile union agriculture minister in the United Front ministry, Chaturanan Mishra, came a poor third in Madhubani. He polled half the votes received in 1996 by the CPI. One reason was said to be the preference extended to Chaturanan Mishra over the locally respected Bhogendra Jha in the selection of candidates.

In Nalanda and Jahanabad constituencies, the CPI was relegated to the fourth spot. Since 1984, Jahanabad has been a bastion of the CPI and its representative, Ramashray Prasad Singh. In any possible adjustment of seats between the Left parties, the CPI would not have yielded Jahanabad to the CPI (ML), even though the latter's influence was growing apace in the region. Most of the CPI (ML) cadre considered the CPI as representing the interest of the landed upper caste and class in Bihar. Most likely, they preferred the more extreme Left, i.e., the CPI (ML), to moderate, centrist, communist parties like the CPI. Finally, in Jahanabad, the CPI (ML) registered a modest but striking improvement polling 132,594 votes. The CPI votes dropped from 280,000 in 1996 to a mere 46,962 in 1998, finishing fourth.

Despite considerable influence of the Left parties in Jahanabad region and in the aftermath of the infamous Laxmanpur–Bathe massacre of the Harijans and supporters of the CPI (ML) in December 1997, it was not the communists who were the front runners, but the RJD and the Samata Party.[14]

This is suggestive of certain dynamics in the sub-regional politics of Bihar. By electing an RJD candidate, the voters might have sent a

message that they didn't relish the Jahanabad region being taken over by violence-prone extremist communist politics; or, the landed interest in the constituency might have united behind Laloo's 'Yadav' candidate to stop the communists from advancing further.[15]

Most likely, the CPI (ML) must not have been able to acquire enough resources in terms of lethal and man power to either match or beat the other side backed up by landed interest, not only of the upper Bhumihar or Rajput castes but also of the middle OBCs (such as Yadavs and Kurmis). For the CPI (ML), the electoral base didn't seem to have expanded enough to take advantage of the split in the votes against itself. After all, among the two leading candidates (the RJD and the Samata Party) the votes were divided along familiar caste lines.

The CPI is still ahead of the CPI (ML) in its electoral activities though. With a greater number of candidates fielded, the CPI polled 1,260,000 (12.6 million votes) as against 770,000 (7.7 million) votes polled by the CPI (ML). In the 1998 election, the CPI was not in a position to derive the same electoral mileage as it did from its alliance with the Congress in the 1970s and with Laloo's Janata Dal in the early 1990s. The two parliamentary constituencies where the CPI polled impressively were Khagaria (70,000) and Bhagalpur (1,180,000), both seemingly areas of CPI influence. Part of the CPI rank had defected to the RJD or the CPI (ML). In Nalanda, the CPI (ML) left the CPI behind in number of votes. There were also places like Begusarai and Siwan where the BJP increased its influence at the cost of the communist parties.[16]

The Rashtriya Janata Dal: Interplay of the Yadav and the Rajput Factors

The Rashtriya Janata Dal remained synonymous with Laloo Yadav in the 12th General Election. The number of seats went down in 1998 compared to 1996, yet the RJD owed its seats to the political skills of Laloo. His leadership of the Yadav caste remained unassailed in the 1998 election despite a few difficulties.[17]

Laloo's unquestioned leadership of the Yadavs was electorally confirmed by certain key contests. For example, in 1996, D.P. Yadav (Jhanjharpur) and Nawal Kishore Rai (Sitamarhi) were Janata Dal Yadav candidates sponsored by Laloo. Both of them fell out with Laloo and were nominated by the Janata Dal in the 1998 election. Laloo

replaced them with his own brand new hand-picked candidates, Surendra Prasad Yadav and Sitaram Yadav. Both of them came out winners. The two were undoubtedly proxy victories for Laloo.

In both places, however, the victory margin was reduced between 1996 (JD) and 1998 (RJD). In Sitamarhi it came down from 82,257 (JD—1996) to 23,518 (RJD—1998), whereas in Jhanjharpur the tally came down from 78,149 (JD—1996) to 37,268 (RJD—1998). Interestingly, in both constituencies, combined votes against Laloo, shared by the JD, the BJP and the SAP, were decisively greater.

There were also indications that because of the factors of Sharad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav a sizable section of the Yadavs did not vote for Laloo and his candidates. In Madhepura, where Laloo and Sharad were in contest, the huge tally of 245,703 votes secured by Sharad against Laloo's 297,686 wouldn't have been possible without the backing of a solid section of Yadavs. If the support of the Yadavs had been intact, then, with the given advantage of money, muscle and ministerial power, Laloo could have managed to keep the margin of victory much higher than a mere 51,983.

Moreover, Laloo could also win because a solid 60,921 votes, mostly of the Rajputs, were sliced off by a Rajput candidate of the Samata Party. It remains a question to be examined why the BJP, the Samata Party and the Janata Dal couldn't reach an understanding to support one candidate against Laloo if he happened to be their common political enemy. Hypothetically, it might have something to do with the alliance between the Yadavs and the Rajputs jointly authored by Laloo and Anand Mohan Singh in the state. The hypothesis made sense in view of the fact that the SAP candidate, a retired CBI official, refused to withdraw from the race in favor of Sharad after a decision was reportedly taken to that effect by the state wing of the SAP.

Interestingly, Laloo's campaign tacitly suggested that Sharad was not a Bihari Yadav, obviously to create a division among the Yadavs.[18] If one was serious about differentiating a candidate on the basis of his roots, then Laloo was also not from Madhepura, a Maithili-speaking region, but from Gopalganj, a Bhojpuri-speaking region he had represented in the past.

In Purnea, the Yadavs didn't solidly rally behind a Yadav candidate fielded by Laloo. They, along with the Muslims, appeared to have supported another Yadav, Rajesh Ranjan (Pappu Yadav), a candidate of Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and the winner of the 1996 election. It is difficult to find out which social faction voted for who.

The election process, like society itself, is so criminalized that all major contestants across the board were reported to have deep involvement in crime. The candidate successful in mobilizing maximum resources in 'managing' the maximum number of polling booths would be victorious. This time it was Jaikrishna Mandal of the BJP. Laloo's candidate came a poor fourth with 58,225 votes and trailed behind the Indian National Congress which came third and secured a respectable 102,297 votes.

As mentioned earlier, Anand Mohan Singh was another factor which promised to bring in the Rajput votes to Laloo's camp. At the height of the anti-Mandal commission report agitation, Anand and Laloo were at daggers drawn apparently representing mutually irreconcilable forces, i.e., the forward Rajput and the backward Yadav castes. Anand Mohan Singh first espoused Nitish Kumar, an enemy of his enemy, as a political ally and contested elections as a Samata Party candidate. Then he left the Samata Party and joined the Rashtriya Janata Party (RJP) of Shankar Sinh Vaghela. In 1998, Laloo decided to accommodate Anand Mohan Singh for the Sheohar constituency as a nominee of the RJD–RJP alliance in the face of stiff opposition from his number two trusted man and a senior minister in his wife's cabinet, Raghunath Jha. Obviously, a grassroots alliance between the Rajputs and the Yadavs aided by Muslims and others helped Anand win the election.

Minorities' Politics and Muslim Winners?

Voting behavior of the Muslims as a distinct constituency in Bihar is worthy of special attention. The exigencies of electoral politics dictate them, as they do other social groups, to behave as an organized interest group. In turn, that seemed to have prepared grounds for communalism in some cases. Muslims in Bihar, according to the 1991 Census, constituted 14.81 percent, as against 82.42 percent Hindus and 0.98 percent Christians. There are as many as 190 assembly constituencies (out of a total of 324) where, according to a report,[19] the Muslim population ranges from 10 to 40 percent. More precisely, 144 assembly constituencies have a Muslim population varying from 10 to 20 percent; 24 constituencies with 20 to 30 percent; 12 with 30 to 40 percent, and 10 constituencies where the Muslims constitute above 40 percent.

In any electoral contest, therefore, if Muslims with their votes as little as 10 percent and as much as 40 percent in any constituency decide to

side *en bloc* with one candidate, it would make a difference in the result. That also becomes a potential source of communal trouble as certain seats have come to be identified as Muslim seats.[20]

Kishanganj

For example, except for 1967, the Lok Sabha representative from Kishanganj has always been a Muslim. Because of the Muslim population being above 40 percent in Kishanganj, all party candidates in the 1998 election were Muslims. Even the BJP fielded a Muslim candidate, Sayed Shah Nawaz Hussain, in an attempt to dislodge the sitting MP, Taslimuddin of the RJD. Although Sayed Hussain came third after the RJD and Mulayam's Samajwadi Party (SP), he lost to the winner by only 6,534 votes. Interestingly, the voting behavior of Muslims in Kishanganj, as in many other constituencies, suggested that they did not always vote *en bloc*.

All the three leading contestants in 1998, Taslimuddin (RJD), Asrarul Haq (SP), and Sayed Hussain (BJP) received almost an even number of votes in the range of 231,000 to 237,000 votes. Obviously, the Muslim votes went in three different directions. Remarkably, Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party made a strong presence in Kishanganj, as its candidate came very close to defeating the incumbent and missed the goal post only by 6,488 votes. There also seemed to be a purpose in awarding the BJP nomination to Sayed Hussain. Sayeds are said to be the Muslim equivalents of the upper castes among Hindus, and for that reason, a Sayed candidate was expected to attract a section of the Muslim votes.

This rings a bell. In Lucknow parliamentary constituency, a section of the Shias was reported to be sympathetic to the BJP and have been voting for the BJP. Incidentally, in 1998, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the BJP candidate from Lucknow, got more votes than Muzaffar Ali, the SP candidate in some assembly segments where Muslims were in the majority.

Katihar

The alliance between the RJD and the Congress was on test in Katihar.[21] Muslims in Katihar constitute 39 percent of the electorate. In 1996, Laloo had campaigned against Tariq for his own candidate, the former Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammad Syed. Just two years

later, Laloo asked voters of Katihar to vote for Tariq. Again, in 1996, the combined votes of the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal accounted for 66 percent as against 28 percent the BJP candidate, N.K. Chaudhary. Tariq Anwar, one of the only two sitting Congress members, was a candidate for the seventh time in his political career. The BJP, disregarding Chaudhary's earlier defeats, fielded him for the third consecutive time.[22]

In Bihar Congress politics, Tariq was a confidante of Kesri who had been successful in containing factionalism represented by Jagannath Mishra and others. Kesri and Jagannath Mishra could be seen as representing the backward and forward camps within the Congress. With the political alliance between Kesri and Laloo getting stronger, the Mishra faction had no *raison de etre* in the Bihar Congress.

However, considering the fact that within the Bihar Congress, the Muslims and the Brahmans have been by and large together, Tariq's closeness to Kesri was a new phenomenon.[23] Or, this may be viewed as the constituents of Laloo, the backwards and the Muslims, clustering together in the Congress. That Jagannath Mishra was not blessed by Sonia or apparently to show there was no rift between Sonia and Sitaram Kesri, Katihar was chosen as one of the places for Sonia to address a rally.

Perhaps to get even with Tariq and break the solidarity of the Muslims, Jagannath Mishra, on behalf of the Bihar Jan Congress, fielded Fazlur Rehman, a member of the Shershawadi minority community within the Muslims. In order to win over the Shershawadis, Laloo had earlier granted them the status of a Scheduled Caste. And if this minority, which numbered about 125,000 in Katihar parliamentary constituency, had voted for its man, the chances of the BJP might have improved. The Muslims as a whole made a rational choice and didn't allow their votes to be split up between the Bihar Jan Congress, the Janata Dal, and the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav. All of them had fielded Muslims as candidates. The Muslims of Katihar had apparently taken lessons from the 1995 elections to the Bihar state legislature. Multiplicity of minority Muslim candidates in several assembly constituencies had helped the BJP pick up a couple of seats in Muslim dominated areas.

Furthermore, in 1998, the Rashtriya Janata Party (RJP) of Shankar Sinh Vaghela (Gujarat) had put up a former MP and a Rajput, Yuvraj. He took away a few Rajput votes which might have otherwise gone to the BJP.

Darbhanga

The JD–RJD sent a Muslim representative for the fourth time in a row. In 1998, however, the victory margin of the incumbent, M. A. A. Fatmi, was reduced from more than 100,000 in 1996 to just 36,151. Two factors were responsible for this. A popular Muslim candidate and a former speaker of the state legislative assembly, Ghulam Sarwar, was fielded by the JD, who took away 76,102 votes. This also indicated that the Muslims were no longer 100 percent with Laloo's RJD.

Second, Darbhanga was one of the places where a traditional alliance between the Brahmans and the Muslims forged during the Indira period was consistently on a decline since 1989. Whereas a new alliance between the Muslims and the Yadavs came to take hold under Laloo's leadership, the BJP progressively replaced the Congress as a party of the upper castes, mainly of the Maithili Brahmans. Since 1991, when the BJP with 12.9 percent of the votes fell far behind the Congress (29 percent) as a main challenger to the JD, it came up to second position in the 1996 and 1998 elections.

Siwan

A muslim RJD sitting candidate, Mohammad Shahabuddin was re-elected in 1998 here, and the BJP replaced the CPI (ML-L) as the runner up. Siwan presented a case where radicalization, criminalization, and communalization of politics and the Robin Hood image of the candidate all blended together.[24] Here again, the margin of victory declined for the RJD. However, Shahabuddin's popularity and the awe he inspires was reinforced in the 1998 election.[25]

On the day of the poll, Shahabuddin had made elaborate arrangements at all polling stations that mattered and very peacefully bogus votes were reportedly cast in his favor.[26] With the amount of influence he enjoyed in his constituency, he might have won from the platform of any other party as well.

The Shahabuddin phenomenon in the Bhojpur region of Bihar sent a complicated socio-economic message. Laloo's political emphasis on 'social justice' for the last eight years released a combined force of the OBCs, the Scheduled Castes and the minorities against the higher castes in Bihar. Yet, Shahabuddin, a minority Muslim, and allegedly a mafia politician was popular because he had been protecting upper caste

medium and big farmers against the 'excesses' of the lower caste dominated CPI (ML-L) cadre.

To sum up, it may be recounted that the number of Muslim representatives from Bihar has varied from three seats in 1989 to six seats in 1998. In view of the total number of 54 seats from Bihar and the population of Muslims staying at 14.8 percent, their representation worked out from 5.5 percent in 1989 to 11.1 percent in 1998. While Darbhanga, Kishanganj, and Siwan were retained by the RJD, Katihar and Madhubani went to the Congress, and Gopalganj was claimed by the SAP. Also, Muslim candidates came *second* at three places: Bettiah (RJD), Kodarma (RJD), and Kishanganj (SP), and *third* at six places: Godda (JD), Chatra (JD), Sheohar (JD), Saharsa (SAP), Kishanganj (BJP), and Katihar (JD).[27]

At one level, it appears that Laloo continued to enjoy popularity with the Muslims and the Muslim–Yadav alliance under his leadership remained intact. He carried his party's Muslim candidates from Darbhanga, Siwan, and Kishanganj and helped the Congress pull two of its Muslim candidates from Katihar and Madhubani. The RJD's Muslim candidates came second at two places: Motiur Rehman (259,487 votes) in Bettiah and Abid Hussain (182,724 votes) in Kodarma. At another level, however, one can see the Muslim solidarity behind Laloo disintegrating. In all the three places where the RJD incumbents won, their victory margin was greatly reduced. The RJD could win only because the votes against it were split up between the second and third candidates. In Gopalganj, Laloo's sitting MP, a Yadav, was defeated by a Muslim and a former chief minister Abdul Ghafoor sponsored by the SAP.

Although no other party seems to have taken over the RJD in commanding the confidence of the Muslims, Laloo cannot always take the Muslims for granted. With the SAP remaining suspect in the eyes of the Muslims because of its association with the BJP, the Congress, under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, could be their best bet.

Sample Constituencies Where Changes Took Place in 1998

Let us take a brief look at four more open constituencies where changes took place between 1996 and 1998 before moving on to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe reserved constituencies. (See Map 5.1 on p. 154 for location of constituencies.)

Open Constituencies

Munger

Munger, in the Anga–Magadh region, was represented by the SAP's Brahmanand Mandal, who won the 1996 election with a margin of 21,146 votes. In 1998, he was defeated by the RJD candidate, Vijay Kumar Vijay, with a slender margin of 4,065 votes. The other two Yadav candidates, one fielded by the Janata Dal and the other by the Samajwadi Party, took away 42,415 and 23,603 votes respectively. Here again, if there had been an electoral understanding between the SAP and the JD, the RJD candidate would not have been able to scrape through even though he polled 350,583 out of 784,083 valid votes (less than 50 percent). Munger, therefore, did not fit in to the pattern where the presence of a Janata Dal candidate cut into the support base of the RJD. Here what happened was just the opposite.

Kodarma

In the Jharkhand region, failure to reach a compromise between the RJD and the Congress in Kodarma, helped the BJP retain its seat with an improved margin. The combined vote of the RJD (182,724) and the Congress (122,478) was by far greater than the BJP's (280,633). There were, however, other participants representing major and minor parties such as the Janata Dal (47,116 votes), the CPI (ML-L) with 29,831 votes, AIMF (2,486 votes) and Bihar Jan Congress (1,904 votes). Together, they took away some 81,337 valid votes, enough to make a difference. Despite the fact that the RJD candidate was a Muslim and it had an alliance with the JMM (S), the BJP candidate, Ritlal Prasad Verma, won with a margin of 97,909 votes as against 46,954 in 1996.

Patna

Elections in Patna, the capital city of Bihar, were countermanded in the first round, an example of lawlessness in the state. Reelection was conducted under strict supervision of the Central Election Commission. This was like a run-off election. A realignment of the social forces was seen in the last phase when a Muslim candidate of the Janata Dal announced his retirement in favor of a Yadav candidate of the RJD. The

Janata Dal announced its official support to the candidate sponsored by the CPI (M), also a partner of the United Front. The contest was, however, polarized between the RJD and the BJP. There was an improved turnout of voters. The voters must have noticed a higher stake in the results and, given the administrative vigilance, felt secure to walk up to polling booths and exercise their constitutional right. The BJP candidate, Dr C.P. Thakur, won the seat. His tally was 331,858, as against 279,252 votes polled by Ram Kripal Yadav, the RJD candidate.[28]

A clear margin of victory with more than 50 percent votes polled by the winning candidate and yet with a modest plurality of 52,606 votes suggests that the election was close, more participatory, and to a large extent fair.

However, according to the voting patterns of the six assembly segments of Patna parliamentary constituency, the rural–urban divide between the supporters of the RJD and the BJP, the contestants' respective constituencies among the social groupings, were clearly discernible. Patna East, Central, and West, with an assortment of different castes, largely urban, salary-dependent, middle class, voted for the BJP whereas Bikram, Phulwarisharif, and Danapur, overwhelmingly populated by Muslims and Yadavs, and on the periphery of urban Patna, expressed their preference for the RJD.

Begusarai

Begusarai is to Bhumihars as Maharajganj, Vaishali, Bikramganj or Sheohar are to Rajputs. By and large, winners and losers in these constituencies come from different parties, but belong to the same caste. In other words, all major political parties conceded 'suzereignty' of castes in their areas. In Begusarai, the winner of 1996 was a CPI-backed independent Bhumihar candidate Ramendra Kumar, who had unseated Krishna Sahi, a Bhumihar woman MP from the Congress Party. As mentioned earlier, close to the 1998 election, Krishna Sahi left the Congress Party and joined the SAP, perhaps in the hope that her Bhumihar base might be pooled with the non-Yadav OBC base of the SAP and ensure a victory.

The Congress upset the cart by fielding a veteran MLA, Rajo Singh, from Shaikhpura, one of the assembly segments of Begusarai. Here, the Congress and the RJD took their alliance sincerely. The constituents of the RJD put their weight behind Rajo Singh, who by virtue of his

winnability, drew the largest chunk of Bhumihar votes too. Both Krishna Sahi and Ramendra Kumar, an official CPI candidate this time, fell by the wayside. In a contest where the polling percentage was above 63 percent, the Congress secured 42.19 percent against 55.24, the combined percentage of both the SAP (34.66) and the CPI (20.57).

It would not be entirely accurate to say that Rajo Singh won only because of the caste equation. He had a better reputation of serving his constituency than the other two candidates. It should be of interest to know that, for the by-election that followed for Shaikhpura legislative constituency, the same equation worked in favor of Rajo Singh's son nominated by the Congress.

Scheduled Caste Reserved Constituencies

The electoral behavior of constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes shows that the phenomenon of the Bahujan Samaj Party does not exist in Bihar. In other words, there was an absence of leadership in Bihar similar to that of Kanshi Ram or Mayawati who could mobilize their Scheduled Caste constituency and strike a bargain with other major political forces. As mentioned earlier, there was a move to get the BSP, the RJD, the Congress, and the JMM into one forum. But that did not work out reportedly because of the 'unreasonable demands' of the BSP chief Kanshi Ram.[29]

Hajipur (SC)

Prominent among the contemporary Harijan leaders from Bihar was still Ram Vilas Paswan, a union Cabinet minister in the United Front ministry. But it could not be determined convincingly if he had the clout to sway the Harijan voters of Bihar. From one election to another, he has been switching between Rosera (SC) and Hajipur (SC) depending upon which way the political wind was blowing. In 1996, he contested against Ram Sundar Das in Hajipur and narrowly won with a lead of 46,231 votes. Then, Ram Sundar Das was a candidate fielded by the BJP–Samata alliance and the Harijan constituents were more inclined to vote for Das. Laloo had to campaign hard in Hajipur to ensure that his Muslim–Yadav constituents stood by Paswan.

By 1998, the political scenario in Hajipur had changed drastically. Following the split in the Janata Dal, Laloo was no longer at Paswan's

side. Ram Sundar Das was also not a candidate sponsored by the BJP–Samata alliance but by the Samajwadi Janata Party (R) of Chandrashekhar, a former prime minister for a brief period. The RJD didn't put up a candidate because it had an alliance with Chandrashekhar's SJP (R). Interestingly, the BJP–Samata alliance also didn't field a candidate. There was no alliance formally arrived at between the JD and the BJP–Samata.

In what turned out to be a straight contest between two candidates not belonging to the two major political formations in the state, Laloo's forces put their weight behind Ram Sundar Das. Ram Vilas Paswan won hands down with 59.7 percent of the votes polled. He was perhaps viewed by the electorate as a hero or a victim of the circumstances. A hero because he was contesting against Laloo's power establishment and a victim because in the event of defeat he was likely to pay a price for standing on moral grounds and holding on to the rump of the Janata Dal after it expelled Laloo from the parent Janata Dal. Paswan had worked for the removal of Laloo from the presidentship of the Janata Dal after he was named by the CBI in the fodder scam. Hajipur was a unique test case to show how equations between social forces, political parties, and major actors changes so rapidly.

Rosera (SC)

Ram Vilas Paswan's colleague and winner from Rosera on a Janata Dal ticket in 1996, Pitambar Paswan, decided to go along with Laloo and retained the seat in 1998, although with a reduced margin. Like many other constituencies, here also the votes against the RJD were heavily split between Ram Sewak Hazari, the Samata Party candidate, and another Paswan sponsored by the Janata Dal. If there had been any arrangement between the SAP and the JD, the result would have been different because these two parties together polled an impressive 59.39 percent against 37.34 percent polled by the RJD.

Nawada (SC)

Nawada, in the Anga–Magadh region, was represented by Kameshwar Paswan of the BJP in 1996. In 1998, this seat was wrested by the RJD, which fielded a woman candidate, Malti Devi. A woman candidate the RJD lost in Gaya was compensated in Nawada. The RJD won with a

margin of 14,384 votes in what can be considered a straight contest. The other two contestants, one independent and the other a CPI (M) candidate, could only secure 38,792 and 21,678 votes respectively. This worked out to a combined 48.22 percent vote against 45.49 percent vote secured by the RJD, the winner. Absence of a major political party, by and large, polarized the contest and worked to the advantage of the RJD.

Gaya (SC)

Gaya, the other reserved constituency of Anga–Magadh, was taken away from the RJD by the BJP, thus making up the loss in Nawada. Bhagwati Devi, the RJD's sitting lady MP, was a former stone crusher and had worked her way up under the patronage of Laloo. In 1996, Laloo had replaced the JD's 1991 MP Rajesh Kumar by Bhagwati Devi, an MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) at that time.

In 1998, the JD brought back Rajesh Kumar in the race to make it a triangular contest. This facilitated the victory of the BJP candidate and knocked out the RJD. A united JD could have easily won the seat, for the combined percentage of votes secured by the RJD and the JD amounted to 53.11 percent as against 42.28 percent secured by the BJP. In 1996, the Congress came second after the JD, and not the BJP–Samata alliance. In 1998, the Congress was not in the race, possibly extending help to the RJD candidate. The poll percentage in this constituency was as high as 68.23 percent. This laid out a question whether popular participation in an election went way up if there was a multi-cornered contest between strong candidates. This could also mean that all candidates were able to stuff ballot boxes with ballot papers in their respective areas of influence.

Sasaram (SC)

In Sasaram (the Bhojpur region), the absence of electoral understanding between the RJD and the BSP took its toll on both parties. The BJP was the beneficiary of a triangular contest again. Although the BJP could legitimately claim that the popular wave was in its favor because its nominee Muni Lal retained Sasaram with an improved margin of victory (from 53,633 in 1996 to 88,728 in 1998), the votes cast against him were also massive. The RJD trailed behind the BJP by more than 88,000 votes but together with the BSP they polled 335,459 votes, i.e., 49.11 percent of valid votes.

Bagaha (SC)

In Bagaha, with 42.37 percent of the vote, the sitting MP, Mahendra Baitha, of the Samata Party, had a clear edge over his closest Janata Dal rival who ended up with 34 percent of the vote. The RJD was conspicuous by its absence, and if it had an alliance with the Congress, it didn't show up, as the Congress candidate could get only 22,115 votes. There was a BSP candidate who ironically secured less than the number of invalid votes.

Palamau (SC)

Palamau was the only reserved constituency for the Scheduled Caste in the Jharkhand region where the RJD, with the help of the Jharkhand party, came a distant second. The sitting MP, Braj Mohan Ram, of the BJP consolidated his position and bettered his own 1996 performance by more than 25,000 votes. Palamau was one of the few constituencies where the winner had more than 50 percent of the total votes polled.

In sum, it may be observed that the Scheduled Caste reserved constituencies sent a mixed signal in 1998 just as they did in 1996. In 1996, out of the eight Scheduled Caste seats, four (Araria, Gaya, Hajipur, and Rosera) had gone to the JD whereas four (Bagaha, Nawada, Palamau, and Sasaram) were secured by the BJP–SAP alliance. Only Bagaha belonged to the SAP. In 1998, in terms of number of seats, the RJD seemed to be a loser because it had only two (Nawada and Rosera). But whereas Nawada was wrested from the BJP, in Rosera the JD–RJD candidate, Pitambar Paswan, improved his margin of victory and retained it. The BJP–SAP alliance improved its number of seats from four in 1996 to only five in 1998. Bagaha stayed with the SAP. Of the four (Araria, Gaya, Palamau, and Sasaram) seats that went to the BJP, Araria and Gaya were wrested from the JD.

What can be empirically established is that the BJP, despite its alliance with the SAP, did not add to its vote base in the Scheduled Caste constituencies. In Gaya and Araria, the BJP was victorious because the votes against it were split up between the RJD and the JD. In Sasaram, the RJD and BSP votes put together far exceeded the BJP's tally of 282,865. The Janata Dal could win only from Hajipur, but its candidates spoilt the chances of the RJD in Araria and Gaya and that of the SAP in Rosera, justifying the role of a *vote-katwa*.[30]

Scheduled Tribe Reserved Constituencies

All the five Scheduled Tribe constituencies fall in the Jharkhand area.[31] In 1996, Laloo had gone without an electoral ally in this region and suffered the consequence. Realizing its little influence in the tribal belt, the RJD allied with the JMM (S) and the Congress in 1998. Consequently, the main contestants were the BJP, the Congress and various factions of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

In 1996, out of the five Scheduled Tribe constituencies, three (Khunti, Lohardagga, and Singhbhum) went to the BJP and one each to the Congress (Rajmahal) and the JMM-S (Dumka). In 1998, the BJP wrested both Rajmahal and Dumka from the Congress and the JMM (S), but yielded Lohardagga and Singhbhum to the Congress.

Dumka, the citadel of the father figure of the JMM and the sitting MP, Shibu Soren, was claimed by the BJP runner up of 1996, Babulal Marandi, with a margin of 12,556 votes. A consistent decline in the popularity of Shibu Soren was confirmed in the 1998 election. He had won the 1996 election with a narrow margin of 5,478 votes. Also, the declared alliance between the RJD, the Congress, and the JMM (S) did not make much of a difference. However, the presence of the CPI and the JD (the constituents of the United Front) candidates marred the prospect of Shibu as they walked away with over 25,000 and 17,000 votes respectively.

In Singhbhum, the BJP incumbent, Chitrasen Sinku, was defeated with almost the same margin with which he won in 1996. The Congress candidate, Vijay Singh Soy, could win because a very large chunk of the votes was taken away by the two factions of the Jharkhand tribal parties, the JMM (S) and JMM (M). Again, the alliance between the RJD, the Congress, and the JMM (S) did not appear to have worked in Singhbhum but interestingly, it did not hurt the Congress. The BJP and the JMM (S), with their combined 58.7 percent vote far outweighed over 36 percent of the vote secured by the Congress.

Unlike a triangular contest in Singhbhum, there was a straight contest between the BJP incumbent, Lalit Oraon, and the Congress challenger, Indra Nath Bhagat, in Lohardagga. The Congress got a respectable 44.6 percent of the vote against over 40 percent by the BJP. For his defeat, Lalit Oraon must be blaming a faction of the JMM and the JD in the field who together polled over 41,000 votes, enough to make a difference in the 19,397 lead for the Congress.

In Khunti, it was the fourth consecutive victory for the BJP. Its candidate, Karia Munda, has had an uninterrupted stint since 1989. He was first elected as a BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal) candidate of the Janata Party in 1977. Although compared to 1996, Munda improved his margin of victory (42 percent of the total votes polled), the votes against him were split up between the Congress and two separate factions of the Jharkhand tribal parties, the JMM and the JKP. Together, the three parties polled over 55 percent of the vote.

In sum, at one glance it appears that the 1998 election results signify an increasing influence of the BJP in the tribal region, a phenomenon of only the past seven years. However, from another angle, it also emerges that similar to the Scheduled Caste constituencies, the BJP did not further add to its influence. Most of its victories were because of the split in the votes against it. At the same time, the 1998 election also indicates restoration of the Congress in the tribal region at the cost of the Jharkhand parties. If one is looking for the effect of the Sonia factor in Bihar, the Jharkhand belt might offer some encouragement. She had campaigned in the region and joined the BJP and others in promising a separate statehood for Jharkhand. This has been a rallying point for all political parties at the time of elections only, not to be taken seriously afterwards.

Conclusion

Just as in any other part of India, an election unfolds the dynamics of society in Bihar. It reveals the pattern of cleavages, adjustments, and alignments between socio-economic and political forces. It has been both an agent and a barometer of change. That's why election study is so fascinating. In Bihar whereas roughly three-fifth of the electorate are either illiterate or in poverty, they are, nevertheless, extremely jealous of their social and political rights and are unlikely to be hoodwinked by political players for a long time.

It was this electorate which preferred for a non-reserved seat a tribal lady to a powerful industrialist and potentially a big job provider in Jamshedpur. The voters of Dhanbad reelected the widow of an upright assassinated Indian Police Service officer rather than a trade union leader. In Buxar, the electorate reelected, with improved margin, Lal Muni Chaubey disregarding a former chief justice of the Kerala high court, Udai Pratap Singh, fielded by the RJD. To go on in the surprise

list, as many as 162,763 votes were cast in favor of a murdered candidate, Debendra Nath Dubey, a Bihar MLA of Mulayam's Samajwadi Party, placing the deceased in third place in the contest.

Again, it is this system of politics and elections which throws up political actors like Laloo who was the hub of Bihari politics for eight years. After Sri Krishna Sinha, the first chief minister of Bihar, he is the only political figure to have called the shots for so long.[32] The nation had watched how he was the *de facto* ruler while serving judicial detention.[33] For the son of a landless farmer belonging to a backward caste in a semi-feudal state—with no pretensions of academic distinction—to be at the political helm with so much defiance and assertion is a sign of change that is attributable to the democratic process the polity is getting used to.[34]

However, Laloo could also not take his preeminence in state politics for granted just as many of his predecessors belonging to the upper caste. Since the Lok Sabha election of 1991, when the Janata Dal under Laloo's leadership and the National Front–Left Front allies won 48 out of 54 seats (32 of its own, and 16 allies), the JD was consistently in decline. In the 1996 parliamentary elections, the Janata Dal came down from 32 to 22 and the National Front–Left Front combine fell from 48 to 26. Following the split in the Janata Dal in July 1997, Laloo was left with 16 out of 22 members in the 11th Lok Sabha.[35] In a sense, a majority of the Janata Dal MPs stood by Laloo. When it came to obtaining the people's mandate in 1998, only seven out of the 16 who were all RJD candidates, could save their seats with reduced margins.

By comparison, the BJP, which had only five seats from Bihar in 1991 and all in the Jharkhand, and the Samata Party, which was not formed until 1994, together raised their strength from 24 in 1996 to 30 in 1998. In the 15 central Bihar constituencies, including Patna where the seven Janata Dal incumbents lost, four went to the Samata Party and three to the BJP.

Additional surprises were the elimination of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the CPI, increase of the Congress from two to five seats, and the loss of five of the six seats by the Janata Dal which did not go with Laloo. Given this trend, there might be a new combination of forces, a new set of players on the political chessboard. At the conclusion of the 12th General Election, as Walter Hauser rightly pointed out, the BJP–Samata alliance had 'in a very real sense filled the political space opened by the weakening of Laloo Yadav's dominance of 1991'.[36]

An Electoral System Flawed

There was another side to the 12th General Election in Bihar which was not unique to that election and that state alone. However, it had a very important bearing on the representational nature, qualifying merit, and legitimacy of the winners. That is, a vast majority of winners were successful at the election because the plurality of votes against him/her were split up among the opponents.

I call this a '(B + C > A)' factor where the added votes of the second (B) and the third (C) candidates in the race outnumbered the votes secured by the winner (A). According to my count, in as many as 41 out of 54 Lok Sabha seats, the factor of (B + C > A) was present, thus rendering the legitimacy, the nature, and quality of representation suspect. Only in five constituencies, i.e., Hajipur (SC), Maharajganj, Patna, Palamau (SC), and Ranchi, have the winners secured more than 50 percent of the votes polled and could legitimately claim to be the real representatives.

Let me illustrate, by giving one example from each region, how the winners get elected with as little as 35 to 40 percent of the votes whereas a vast percentage of votes polled against him/her are lost sight of.

In Sitamarhi (Vazika–Mithila), of the valid votes polled, the three front-runners secured votes as follows: Sitaram Yadav (RJD—277,898 votes, 35.85 percent); Nawal Kishore Rai (JD—254,380 votes, 32.82 percent); and Avinash Kumar Singh (BJP—225,161 votes, 29.05 percent). Notice that the combined votes of the Janata Dal and the BJP against the RJD, the winner, are as high as 61.87 percent. The RJD walked away as a winner with 35.85 percent of the vote.

In Balia (Anga–Magadh), the RJD won the election with 38.39 percent of the vote and more than 57 percent were against it shared by the CPI (30.02 percent) and the BJP (27.75 percent).

In Arrah (Bhojpur), the SAP secured 38.87 percent of the vote and 60.56 percent of the vote against it was split up between the RJD (38.30 percent) and the CPI (ML-L) (22.26 percent).

In Singhbhum (ST) in the Jharkhand region, the winner, the Congress (I), polled 36.44 percent of the vote and 58.71 percent of the vote against it was shared between the BJP (34.32 percent) and the JMM-S (24.39 percent). Add to this the eight vote victory of the BJP over the Congress in Rajmahal constituency.

A winner is mostly a beneficiary of the fragmentation of votes against him/her. This fragmentation occurs from a triangular to a multi-polar contest. That all the votes in opposition are not cornered by the second

and the third candidates only is illustrated by the fact that in as many as 42 out of the 54 constituencies in Bihar, the combined votes of candidates (B and C) have stayed below 50 per cent of the total votes in a particular constituency. This also implies there are multiple political participants in the race, although in 1998 there were fewer candidates in the race than in 1996.

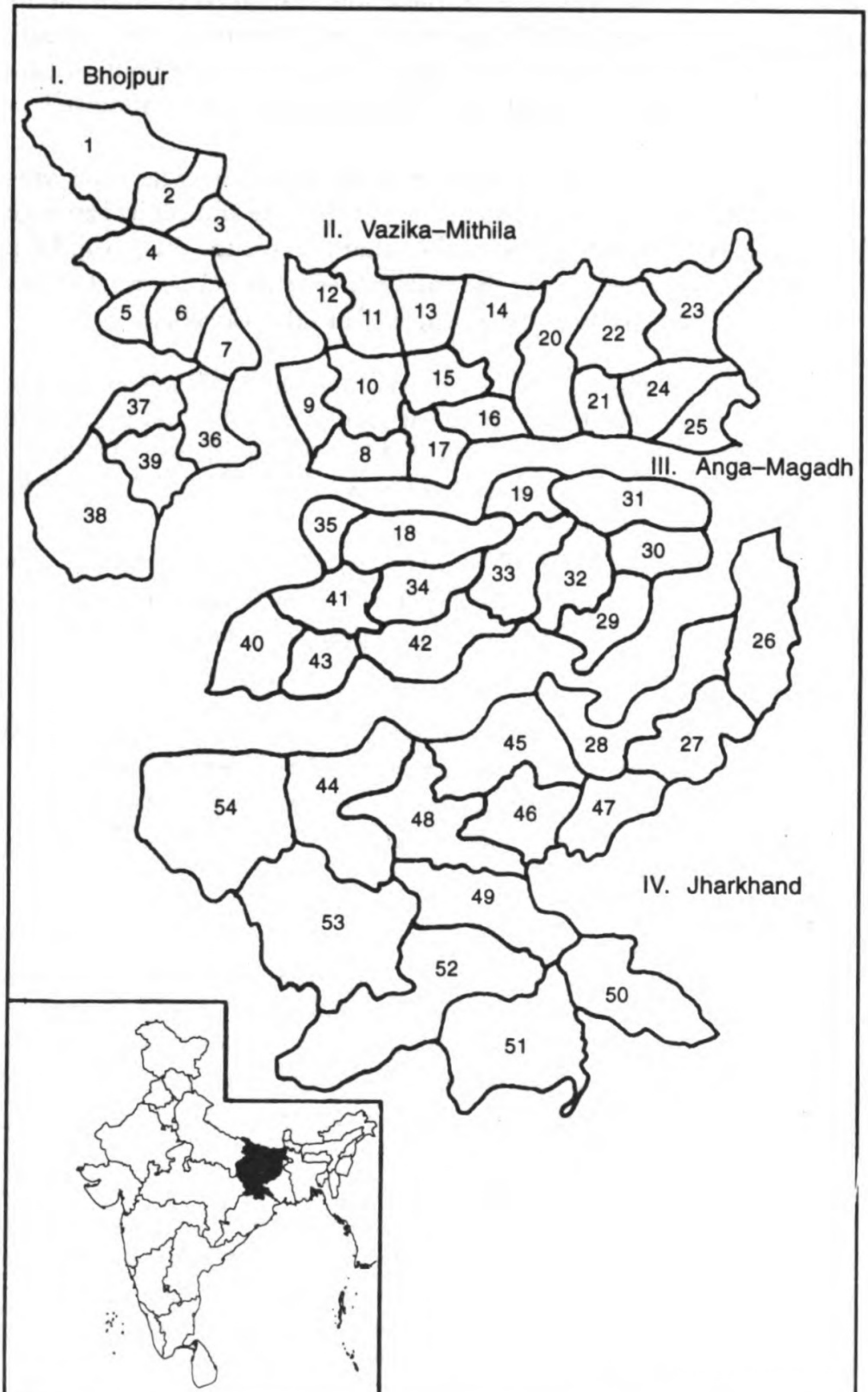
Furthermore, there were a number of constituencies where the winner (A) had secured less than 50 percent of the vote and yet had an edge over the combined percentage of the other two contestants (B and C). In that case, the votes against the winner were shared by several others in the race. Let's take just two examples from this category:

1. In Hazaribagh, the BJP winner (A), polled 45.90 percent of the valid votes, which was more than the combined poll percentage (42.57) of the CPI and the JMM (M), i.e., contestants (B) and (C). Here the rest of the non-BJP votes were shared by parties like CPI (ML-L) and the JMM (S).
2. In Bagaha (SC), the SAP winner secured 42.37 percent of the vote against the combined 38.08 percent of the Janata Dal and the Congress (I). The rest of the opposition votes were scattered among independents and the BSP.

The only way to get rid of this highly unrepresentative nature is to introduce a constituency-wide open 'primary', whereafter if the winner has not secured over 50 percent of the total votes polled in the first round, the *two front-runners* only will go in for a final round of polling within a reasonable period. At that stage, the election expenses of the two finalists will be met by the state, i.e., the tax payers.

In a situation where political parties, by and large, do not exercise enough discretion in selecting suitable candidates, the introduction of a primary will ensure public screening of candidates. Imposition from above will stop.[37] Most certainly, there will be interest aggregation and articulation, and real coalition formation at the grassroots (village and mohalla) level. The problems of booth capturing, defection in party loyalties, bribery, criminalization, and communalization of politics will be curbed to a great extent.[38] If democracy has to flourish, there has to be a refined way of selecting representatives who, in turn, will be the custodians of democracy. Like the rest of the world, Bihar should also usher in the 21st century promising change and its elections must stop taking a periodic toll on human lives just as drought, flood, cold, and heat waves do in Bihar.

Map 5.1: Bihar: Region-wise Distribution of Constituencies



I. Bhojpur:	Bagaha, SC (1), Bettiah (2), Motihari (2), Gopalganj (4), Siwan (5), Maharajganj (6), Chapra (7), Arrah (36), Buxar (37), Sasaram, SC (38), Bikramganj (39).
II. Vazika–Mithila:	Hajipur, SC (8), Vaishali (9), Muzaffarpur (10), Sitamarhi (11), Sheohar (12), Madhubani (13), Jhanjharpur (14), Darbhanga (15), Rosera, SC (16), Samastipur (17), Saharsa (20), Madhepura (21), Araria, SC (22), Kishanganj (23), Purnea (24), Katihar (25).
III. Anga–Magadh:	Barh (18), Balia (19), Banka (29), Bhagalpur (30), Khagaria (31), Monghyr (32), Begusarai (33), Nalanda (34), Patna (35), Aurangabad (40), Jahanabad (41), Nawada, SC (42), Gaya, SC (43).
IV. Jharkhand:	Rajmahal, ST (26), Dumka, ST (27), Godda (28), Chatra (44), Kodarma (45), Giridih (46), Dhanbad (47), Hazaribagh (48), Ranchi (49), Jamshedpur (50), Singhbhum, ST (51), Khunti, ST (52), Lohardagga, ST (53), Palamau, SC (54).

Appendix Table 5A.1: List of Lok Sabha Constituencies Secured by Different Political Parties in 1996 and 1998

Party	*Constituencies Won*	
	1996	*1998*
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Bettiah, Buxar, Chapra, Chatra, Dhanbad, Giridih, Godda, Hazaribagh, Kodarma, Motihari, Nawada (SC), Jamshedpur, Khunti (ST), Lohardagga (ST), Palamau (SC), Ranchi, Sasaram (SC), Singhbhum (ST).	Araria (SC), Bettiah, Bhagalpur, Buxar, Chatra, Dhanbad, Dumka (ST), Gaya (SC), Giridih, Godda, Hazaribagh, Jamshedpur, Khunti (ST), Kodarma, Palamau (SC), Patna, Purnea, Rajmahal (ST), Ranchi, Sasaram (SC).
Indian National Congress (INC)	Begusarai, Katihar, Lohardagga, Madhubani (ST), Singhbhum (ST).	Katihar, Rajmahal (ST)
Janata Dal (JD)	Arah, Araria (SC), Aurangabad, Banka, Bhagalpur, Bikramganj, Darbhanga, Gaya (SC), Gopalganj, Hajipur (SC), Jhanjharpur, Khagaria, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Rosera (SC), Saharsa, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Siwan, Vaishali.	Hajipur (SC).
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Nil	Balia, Chapra, Darbhanga, Jahanabad, Jhanjharpur, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Motihari, Munger,

Appendix Table 5A.1 continued

Appendix Table 5A.1 continued

		Muzaffarpur, Nawada (SC), Rosera (SC), Saharsa, Samastipur, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Siwan, Vaishali.
Samata Party (SAP)	Nil	Bagaha (SC), Banka, Barh, Maharajganj, Munger, Nalanda, Sheohar.
Communist Party of India	Balia, Jahanabad, Madhubani.	Nil
Independents and Others	Begusarai (Ind., Ramendra Kumar), Dumka (ST, JMM-S), Purnea (SP, Rajiv Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav).	Sheohar (RJP, Anand Mohan Singh)

Notes and References

1. The leading figures of the JD including Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan had to depend on Laloo's personal appeal and campaign to win their parliamentary seats. See Hemendra Narayan, 'Paswan Hopes to Soar on Laloo's Wings', *Statesman Weekly*, May 4, 1996, p. 16.
2. 'Laloo Out; and in Form', *Statesman Weekly*, December 20, 1997, p. 4.
3. Nalin Verma, 'Dal MLAs Pay No Heed to Laloo's "Distress call"', *Statesman Weekly*, May 3, 1997, p. 3.
4. 'Left Parties Keep Distance from Laloo', www.thehindu.com, December 14, 1997.
5. A senior anonymous leader of the RJD and a former minister in the United Front government quoted in 'Left Parties Keep Distance from Laloo,' (Note 4 above).
6. Alka Ranjan, 'Squabbling Stalls Formation of Anti-BJP Front', *India Abroad* (Chicago edition), January 30, 1998, p. 8.
7. 'RJD List for Bihar Released', *The Times of India* (New Delhi), January 24, 1998.
8. 'Shekhar Justifies Decision to Join Laloo', *Statesman Weekly*, January 17, 1998, p. 3.
9. Sitaram Yechury, 'The BJP's False Claims', *The Hindu* (Chennai), March 11, 1998, p. 2. Also see, Nalin Verma, 'Laloo Holds Fort, Checks Saffron March in Bihar', *Statesman Weekly*, March 7, 1998, p. 2.
10. Hemendra Narayan, 'Parties Ignore LS Resolution on "Corrupt" Candidates', *Statesman Weekly*, January 24, 1998, p. 3.
11. 'Congress (I)'s Woes in Bihar Far From Over', *The Hindu*, March 8, 1998, p. 8.
12. *Ibid.*
13. In 1957, the undivided communist party had polled 5 percent of the votes. Since 1961, the CPI had maintained its presence in the state. Its MPs have numbered from two to five and its poll percentage was in double digits. In 1977, the CPI and the CPI(M) had together secured a little over 8 percent of the total votes cast in the state. In the general elections of 1991 and 1996, electoral adjustments between the Left and the JD led by Laloo had benefited the two sides. In 1991, the CPI had eight MPs elected to the Lok Sabha. That was the best performance so far. The same year, a CPI(M) candidate was also elected from Nawada for the first time, raising the total

number of Left MPs from Bihar to nine. In 1996, the CPI could retain four of the eight seats in spite of its alliance with Laloo's Janata Dal becoming weaker. Unlike the neighboring state of West Bengal, the CPI (M) has never been a formidable force in Bihar. In 1989, the CPI (ML) had made an electoral debut under the name of IPF (Indian People's Front) by winning the Arrah parliamentary seat. See, 'Left Parties Take a Beating in Bihar', *The Hindu*, March 9, 1998, p. 15.

14. For the traumatic impact of caste violence on elections in Jahanabad, see 'Bihar Caste Killings Bode Violent Elections', *Statesman Weekly*, January 17, 1998, p. 2.
15. 'Politicians Promise to Arm Poor in Rural Bihar', *India Abroad*, January 9, 1998, p. 9.
16. Nalin Verma, 'Saffron Sun Rises Over Bihar's "Leningrad"', *Statesman Weekly*, February 21, 1998, p. 2.
17. With the Yadav clan by Laloo's side, there were occasionally problems in managing the political ambitions of his family members. Sadhu Yadav, one of Laloo's brothers-in-law, who had earned a lot of notoriety and political clout, created difficulties for Laloo as he was determined to contest from Gopalganj, a relatively safe constituency. In the dissolved Lok Sabha, Gopalganj was represented by the RJD's Lal Babu Yadav, who in the end was not disturbed. This was similar to a situation in UP where Mulayam Singh Yadav decided to move from Mainpuri to contest from Sambhal, an easy pasture. He replaced a Yadav candidate of his own party who had won from that constituency in 1996. The replaced candidate revolted and joined the rebel BSP group. There was other evidence of Yadavs being pitted against Yadavs. Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party fielded a candidate against Laloo's candidate in Kishanganj and Laloo fielded a Yadav candidate to contest Mulayam Singh Yadav's candidate in Purnea. Laloo himself contested against Sharad Yadav in Madhepura constituency. Both had claims on Yadav votes.
18. 'Former Friends Now Poles Apart in North Bihar', *Statesman Weekly*, January 17, 1998, p. 2. Also see, Nalin Verma, 'Laloo Takes Bihar Back to Lantern Age', *Statesman Weekly*, January 3, 1998, p. 5, and 'Pigeons to Carry Laloo's Message', *Statesman Weekly*, January 3, 1998, p. 5.
19. *India Today*, March 15, 1995, p. 49.
20. I have treated this question in detail in an earlier essay. See Binoy S. Prasad, 'General Elections, 1996 Major Role of Caste and Social Factions in Bihar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 22, 1997, pp. 3021–28.
21. 'Congress (I)–RJD Alliance on Test', *The Hindu*, February 1, 1998, p. 1.
22. Just after the split in the Janata Dal and formation of the RJD by Laloo, the Congress party legislators in Bihar abstained from voting on the confidence motion brought against Laloo's government. That was a tacit support to Laloo's government despite its sullied image on account of the fodder scam. The tacit support of the Congress to Laloo became obvious when Laloo installed his wife, Rabri Devi, as chief minister on the eve of his imminent arrest and a fresh vote of confidence was called for. The Congress voted for the Rabri government.
23. The period of Abdul Ghafoor as the chief minister in the early 1970s was a reminder of the Brahman–Muslim alliance in the Congress. Ghafoor was a chief minister directly sponsored by and under the control of Lalit Narain Mishra, a minister in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet in New Delhi. Jagannath Mishra was his brother's political eye and ear in the state capital. In 1996, Tariq Anwar was careful not to seek the support of P.V. Narasimha Rao, the then prime minister, because of the latter's association with the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Not only was Rao unwelcome in Katihar, none of Tariq's campaign posters carried his picture.
24. For a discussion on electoral politics and communalization of the electorate see, Prasad, 'General Elections' (Note 20 above).

25. Sajeda Momin, 'A "Criminal" Close to the People's Heart', *Statesman Weekly*, February 21, 1998, p. 4.
26. Nalin Verma, 'Bihar Shows the Way Again', *Statesman Weekly*, February 28, 1998, p. 6. It is often suggested that Bihar's illiteracy and backwardness are responsible for the dominance of caste and communal politics. In fact, one of the states highest in literacy and prosperity, Kerala, is also not free from caste and religious politics. See, T.N. Gopa Kumar, 'Caste, Religion Dominant Cards in Kerala', *Statesman Weekly*, February 28, 1998, p. 2.
27. These and other numerical election figures were calculated on the basis of constituency-, party-, and candidate-wise break ups published in *The Hindu* (Chennai edition) and election data culled from the internet in the month of March 1998.
28. *The Hindu*, April 3, 1998, p. 1.
29. Ranjan, 'Squabbling Stalls Formation' (Note 6 above), p. 8.
30. In the dialects of Bihar, *vote-katwa* means candidates who get the votes cut/slashed. Even a rustic and illiterate Bihari voter would understand that a *vote-katwa* candidate didn't have a fair chance of winning the election. However, he or she might walk away with such number of votes as to make a difference in the outcome of the election.
31. Out of a total of 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in the Jharkhand area, six are reserved: Palamau (54) for Scheduled Castes, and Rajmahal (26), Dumka (27), Singhbhum (51), Khunti (52), and Lohardagga (53) for Scheduled Tribes.
32. Sajeda Momin, 'People Throng Laloo Rally to Feast Eyes on "Beast of the Air"', *Statesman Weekly*, February 14, 1998, p. 7.
33. Nalin Verma, 'Calling the Shots from Behind Bars', *Statesman Weekly*, October 4, 1997, p. 10.
34. See, 'Laloo Refuses to Quit', *Statesman Weekly*, May 3, 1997, p. 3; 'Laloo Warns Centre Against Ouster', *Statesman Weekly*, May 3, 1997, p. 3; 'Laloo's Ire', *Statesman Weekly*, January 17, 1998, p. 8.
35. Symptoms of dissidence in the Janata Dal were noticed earlier, See, 'JD Dissidents in Bihar Launch Campaign', *Statesman Weekly*, May 3, 1997, p. 3. Also see, 'Opposition in Bihar Plagued by In Fighting', *Statesman Weekly*, October 4, 1997, p. 7.
36. Walter Hauser, 'Fine Balance Sheet', www.thetelegraph.com, March 24, 1998.
37. To give an example of how candidates are sought to be imposed from above and how the factor of caste works, Mulayam Singh Yadav, the head of the SP, a constituent of the National Front, unilaterally fielded 83 candidates in UP and 12 in Bihar. For Varanasi constituency, he selected a candidate who was a Jaisawal by caste. The candidate refused to file his papers on behalf of the SP when he learnt that the Jaisawal 'samaj', the caste organization, had unanimously decided to extend its support to the BJP. Nonplussed, Mulayam decided to extend his party's support to the CPI (M), another constituent of the National Front. See, Manash Ghosh, 'Spanner in the Works', *Statesman Weekly*, February 21, 1998, p. 11.
38. Bihar has the distinction of ranking first in election related violence. See, '23 Killed in Bihar Poll Violence', *Statesman Weekly*, February 21, 1998, p. 5; 'Repoll Ordered in 599 Booths', *Statesman Weekly*, February 21, 1998, p. 5. For the second round of violence see, 'Sixteen Killed in Second Phase of Polls', *Statesman Weekly*, February 28, 1998, p. 6; 'Bloody Polls', editorial, *Statesman Weekly*, February 28, 1998, p. 8. The obvious consequences of the hardening of the present electoral system were noticed (*a*) in the steady decline of women's participation, and (*b*) in an explicit preference shown by all political parties while selecting their candidates for socially recognized militant castes such as the Yadavs and the Rajputs to the exclusion of other social groups.

6

The 12th Lok Sabha Election in Maharashtra: The Congress Alliance Defeats the BJP/Shiv Sena

Sikata Banerjee[1]

In downtown Mumbai, tucked in between the MLA hostel and the headquarters of the Maharashtra police, is a small food vending stall.[2] A board listing the various types of food stands outside the stall and the last item listed—'zunka bhakar'—costs Re 1. This stall represents one of the many schemes promised by the Shiv Sena/BJP government when it came to power at the state level in 1995. The state government provided land and grants so that poor laborers in both urban and rural areas could receive a meal for Re 1. However, very soon, these stalls (like the one mentioned above) were selling snack items priced considerably higher than Re. 1 and one would be hardpressed to find laborers among the crowds milling around the front ordering food. The government explained this deviation from the original purpose of the project by arguing that these stalls could not become self-sustaining if other, more expensive, items were not sold. The opposition and journalists, skeptical of this rationale, allege that these stalls were distributed by Sena leaders to reward their loyal workers, and although all of these stalls still offer the Re 1 meal, the fact that very rarely do poor people frequent these stalls indicates the failure of this scheme to actually deliver subsidized meals to the urban and rural poor.[3]

The failure of the Re 1 meal plan, among a host of other unfulfilled promises made by the Shiv Sena/BJP government when they took over at the state level after the 1995 assembly election, begins the story behind the rout of this alliance in the 1998 Lok Sabha election. The alliance went from having 33 parliamentary seats to retaining only 10, while the Congress increased its number of seats from 15 to 37, of which four seats were won by its coalition partner, the Republican Party of India (RPI). Although the non-performance of the Shiv Sena/BJP government at the state level was an important issue, other factors, including the Congress–Republican Party–Samajwadi Party (SP) alliance, the temporary abeyance of factionalism within the Congress and the RPI, vigorous election campaigning by Congress leaders such as Sharad Pawar/Chuggan Bhujbal, and changes in patterns of caste voting were equally vital in ensuring the Congress victory.

However, the Congress victory should not be read as a significant loss in the popularity of the Shiv Sena/BJP. Table 6.1 presents the percentage of popular votes polled by the three major parties. Popular votes for the Congress rose from 35 percent to 44 percent, but note that the BJP and Shiv Sena's share of votes also rose by approximately 1 percent and 3 percent respectively.[4] The most obvious explanation of these increases, in light of the Congress victory, is of course India's first-past-the-post electoral system. But, other facts also explain the rise in vote shares. In 1996, Maharashtra had a 52 percent voter turnout, while in 1998 the turnout was 57 percent. Further, in 1996, there were 1,065 candidates contesting, while in 1998 this figure fell to 377. In other words, more people were voting for fewer candidates, which explains the increase in percentage for all parties. Further, the percentage of popular votes obtained by the Sena and BJP together (42 percent) in 1998 almost equals the Congress share (43.6 percent). Although these facts do minimize the scope of the Congress victory, it would not do to dismiss this win too quickly. In 1996, of the 18 seats that the BJP won, it only polled a majority (i.e., greater than 50 percent) of votes in three constituencies, while the Shiv Sena got a majority of votes in two out of the 15 seats it won. Similar figures for the Congress were four out of 15 constituencies. But in 1998, the Congress and its allies received a majority of votes in 27 of the 37 constituencies they won. This distribution of popular majorities emphasizes the advantage that the Congress Party attained in the 1998 election.

How the Congress won in the wake of its rather dismal performance in the 1996 Lok Sabha election is the question that must define any

Table 6.1: Percentage of Popular Votes Polled by Parties in the 1996 and 1998 Elections

Party	*1996*	*1998*
	% Vote	*% Vote*
Congress	34.8	43.6
BJP	21.8	22.4
Shiv Sena	16.8	19.6
Republican Party	4.9	4.1
Independents	9.6	2.4
Janata Dal	3.3	1.6
Samajwadi Party	2.0	2.6
Peasants and workers	1.5	0.86

Sources: Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to Lok Sabha 1996: Poll Statistics* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Government Publications; 1996) and Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to Lok Sabha 1998: Poll Statistics* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Government Publications, 1998).

analysis of the 1998 election in Maharashtra. The answer lies in the impact of the factors already mentioned: the electoral alliance, effective campaigning which limited factionalism in the Congress as well as its alliance partners, shifts in caste voting patterns, and the loss of credibility of the Shiv Sena/BJP government. In other words, the Congress–RPI–SP alliance, along with a temporary decrease in Congress and RPI factionalism, succeeded in attaining a victory for the Congress Party, because the Sena/BJP's failure to fulfill certain election promises led to crucial shifts in caste and Dalit/Muslim voting patterns.

The Congress Alliance with RPI and Samajwadi Party

In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, it was speculated that a major reason why the Congress had not managed to defeat the BJP/Sena alliance was the presence of candidates who were either Congress rebels running as independents and/or candidates from the RPI, SP, Janata Dal (JD), or various communist parties who took away votes that would have enabled a Congress win. Examples of such triangular contests included Mumbai South where BJP's Jayantiben Mehta defeated Murli Deora of the Congress by a margin of 23,000 votes. In the same constituency, Marzaban Patrawala of the SP polled over 48,000 votes. Since Murli

Deora had a strong presence in this Muslim-dominated constituency, it was argued that the SP candidate drew away votes that would have given Deora the victorious edge. Similarly, in Satara, a constituency in the heart of Congress-dominated western Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena candidate defeated Congress with a margin of 11,000 votes. An independent, Udayanraje Bhonsale, had polled 113,685 votes. Therefore, it can be argued, this candidate who could not come to an understanding with the Congress, siphoned off votes that may have given this party a victory.

Table 6.1 supports this hypothesis. It highlights that while independents polled almost 10 percent of the votes in 1996, in 1998 they only polled 2 percent of the vote. Further, the number of candidates fell by almost two-thirds (to 377 from 1,065) in the 1998 election. Of the 1,065 candidates contesting the election in 1996, 805 were independent, while the Congress, BJP, and Shiv Sena fielded 48, 20, and 25 candidates respectively. In contrast, in 1998, of 377 total candidates, 171 were independent, 41 from the Congress, 25 from the BJP, and 22 from the Shiv Sena. As the figures indicate, in 1996, approximately 76 percent of the candidates were independent, while in 1998 this number had dropped to 45 percent and, consequently, given the higher voter turnout, official party candidates received more votes.

Frequently, these independent candidates who have siphoned off votes that may have enabled a Congress victory have been Congress rebels or supported by Congressmen who have a grudge against the official party candidate because he/she belongs to a rival faction. Indeed, such behavior appears to have been quite common in the 1990 and 1995 assembly elections as well as the 1996 Lok Sabha election.[5] But in the 1998 election, Sharad Pawar's organizational skills prevented such destructive internal rivalry.[6] Further, the RPI and SP leaders realized that their only hope of gaining a seat in parliament was to ally with the Congress rather than run against it, and consequently, the RPI factions of Athavale, Gawai, Ambedkar, and Kawade, and the Congress formed an election partnership which delivered four parliamentary seats to the RPI. This alliance did not prove so profitable for the Samajwadi Party as none of the SP candidates won. But the presence of this party in the alliance attracted Muslim and Scheduled Caste swing votes, giving Congress the winning margin in several constituencies.

It should be emphasized that the presence of the Samajwadi Party, which is popularly seen as sympathetic to Muslim interests, acted as a reassurance to a community still wary of the Congress after its failure to

protect Muslim interests during the incident in Ayodhya, the Mumbai riots, and the bomb blasts. Indeed, in Mumbai NW, it was argued that the Janata Dal, which had declined to join the Congress alliance, siphoned off votes that would have made the SP candidate victorious.[7] Therefore, the Congress alliance eliminated triangular contests and consolidated votes for the Congress in opposition to the BJP and Shiv Sena candidates and facilitated such a spectacular Congress victory.

However, just because this partnership enabled a Congress victory in 1998, it must not be assumed that the same electoral strategy would have helped the Congress in 1996. According to an experienced observer of the Maharashtra political scene, this alliance worked in 1998 because of certain unique contextual factors:

> ...Now there are some popular theories [about the Congress win]...that it was the strategic alliance between the Samajwadi Party and Republican Party organized and coordinated by Sharad Pawar which gave him these seats.... Now one question that can be asked is this. If this was so sure then why was it that one day before the results...the Congress–RPI–SP alliance was not saying that we will make major gains.... Everybody became wise only after seeing the results. That is why I propose to say that this is a wrong assessment. Why? Because there were two indicators which were absolutely clear as to why the BJP/Shiv Sena was to be defeated this time.... One is the Sonia factor which everybody is trying to downplay now.... [The] second factor was the almost total loss of credibility of the Shiv Sena/BJP...non-performance people can take...what they cannot tolerate is large scale cheating.... Not only did the Shiv Sena not perform, they also created an atmosphere of extortion culture.
>
> *Author*: So the alliance worked because the Shiv Sena had lost credibility.
>
> *Journalist*: Yes. The alliance worked because of two reasons. There was Sonia. The second thing was the Shiv Sena BJP had come into disrepute.
>
> *Author*: So in other words in 1996 this alliance would not have worked.
>
> *Journalist*: No, because then the elections and the Congress Party was led by Narasimha Rao who cannot enthuse Muslims. To ignore Sharad Pawar's organizational skills would be unfair, [but] those organizational skills can be put into action only if there is something to work for.[8]

Sonia Gandhi's presence and her links with the Nehru–Gandhi legacy may have reassured grassroots Congress workers that the party would be moving towards a more dynamic leadership. Sonia's campaigning may also have signaled to minorities such as Muslims, that this reinvigoration of Congress leadership might signify a greater determination to fight for their protection. As for the second factor—the loss of credibility of the Shiv Sena/BJP—there is some evidence for this. But this disillusionment with the Shiv Sena/BJP must not be overstated because as Table 6.1 indicates, these two parties jointly polled almost 42 percent of the popular vote. This figure emphasizes that a large percentage of Maharashtrians who voted felt some sort of allegiance to these parties. Indeed, the impact of the popular dissatisfaction with the Sena government was not influential because it did not lead to a *universal* decrease in support; rather, public resentment in specific constituencies caused swings in Maratha–Kunbi, Other Backward Caste (OBC), and Dalit/Muslim votes which in turn led to a Congress win. The inability of the Sena/BJP to keep their election promises persuaded enough people—who had looked to the alliance as an alternative to the Congress which they perceived as having lost legitimacy because of allegations of factionalism and corruption—that perhaps these parties could not provide the political stability and economic benefits that they had hoped for.

In an exit poll done after the 1995 assembly election, voter responses indicated that the Congress was losing its traditional support among the Scheduled Castes and Muslims.[9] This election was a harbinger of the upcoming Congress loss in the 1996 Lok Sabha election. In the assembly election, the Congress on its own, managed to get 80 seats out of 288 with 30 percent of the vote, while the BJP/Sena won 138 seats with 29 percent of the votes. The Sena/BJP's victory may not have seemed trendsetting if it is recalled that at least one reason for the Congress loss was that many Congress rebels (mainly anti-Pawar) ran as independents against official candidates.[10] But it cannot be denied that the BJP/Sena had polled almost the same percentage of popular vote as the Congress Party, and this signified that this alliance remained a threat to Congress dominance. An additional factor in the Congress loss was the decrease in electoral support by traditional Congress vote banks—Muslims and Scheduled Castes—only 30 percent of the Scheduled Castes and 50 percent of the Muslims voted for the Congress.[11] The Mumbai riots and the reaction to the bomb blasts in Mumbai alienated many Muslims, as they perceived that the Congress Party had failed to

champion and protect their interests. Further, in certain regions of Maharashtra, Maratha–Kunbis, who had traditionally been staunch supporters of the Congress, were looking to the Shiv Sena/BJP as a political alternative.[12]

In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, this disillusionment continued. Parties like the RPI, SP, and Janata Dal were wary of an alliance with the Congress considering Muslim emotions and continued factionalism within the Congress as politicians debated the profitability of remaining within the Congress fold. The triangular contests, the almost equal division of popular votes between the Congress and BJP/Sena, and the inability of any party to get a majority in more than a few constituencies in both 1995 and 1996 emphasized a fractured populace and political parties unsure of their options.

In 1998, the context had changed mainly because crucial swing voters were slowly becoming disillusioned with the Shiv Sena/BJP or they had decided that the Congress was the lesser evil of the two available choices. Such voters included low and middle income Maharashtrians in Mumbai, OBCs in certain rural constituencies, and Dalits and Muslims both in Mumbai and elsewhere. As a result, the Congress–SP–RPI alliance was able to capture enough of a margin to defeat the Sena/BJP candidates.

Shifts in Voting Patterns in Maharashtra

Until 1990, the numerically and socially dominant caste in Maharashtra—Maratha—as well as certain Kunbis were staunchly pro-Congress, and the mainstay of this party was the Maratha-dominated patronage networks in rural Maharashtra.[13] However, after 1990, political observers have noted a split in Maratha votes:

> It is interesting to note that the Shiv Sena is emerging as an alternative political vehicle available to the marathas.... The Shiv Sena which made inroads in rural areas by mobilising OBCs is now representing along with the Congress, the maratha interests.[14]

Since 1980, Marathwada has been in a situation of flux. The Congress has not been able to put up a good show in this region. Badly run cooperatives, droughts and famines, internal factionalism within the Congress and a recalcitrant maratha caste nursing its feudal past

> mark the Marathwada region.... A total failure of the Congress organization and splintering of maratha leadership resulted in unprecedented rebellion.[15]

These quotations summarize the division in Maratha votes. For example, in 1998, the Shiv Sena candidate from Ahmednagar in western Maharashtra, a Congress stronghold, was a Maratha sugar cooperative baron who defected because of internal rivalries with the Pawar group and won this constituency. Similarly, in Erandol in north Maharashtra, the BJP candidate won because of the Maratha backing of this candidate in a Congress–Maratha-dominated area.[16]

In 1995, about 40 percent of the Maratha–Kunbi vote was for the Congress while 26 percent of the Maratha–Kunbis voted for the Shiv Sena/BJP.[17] Since the Maratha vote has been split, the OBCs, who are not numerically significant but are politically active enough to provide swing votes to ensure electoral victory, have become crucial for both the Congress and the BJP/Shiv Sena. In the beginning, the OBCs in Marathwada and Vidharbha did look to the Shiv Sena and BJP as parties which could provide them with a political vehicle for breaking the Congress-based Maratha hegemony in Maharashtra politics:

> ...the discontented people, young, educated men among them have been turning to the Shiv Sena. This is especially the case among the Other Backward Castes (O.B.C.s) which have neither the benefits of reservations under the constitution...nor the benefit of the political patronage available to the Marathas.[18]

But as these elections have shown, the OBC vote has moved towards the Congress in certain areas to provide them with the winning edge. Because of the campaigning efforts of Sharad Pawar and Chuggan Bhujbal, Malis, Dhangars, and Telis (prominent OBCs) were swayed to vote for the Congress.[19]

In Vidharbha, the OBC vote is divided between the Congress and the BJP and it is the crucial swing vote. One of the major reasons behind the 1998 BJP loss of all constituencies in this region was the OBC swing towards the Congress. This shift may be partially a result of the BJP/Sena government's delay in coming to the aid of OBC Vidharbha farmers who incurred financial losses due to weather-related crop failures.[20] Additionally, growing Maratha support for the BJP and Shiv Sena has made OBCs wary of the alliance since one of the major

reasons they had turned to these parties was to resist Maratha political power, and moreover, the Sena/BJP had failed to ameliorate such fears by providing benefits to their OBC supporters. The Congress played up these fears in their 1998 election campaign and managed to draw crucial swing votes to win various constituencies. Consequently, whether or not OBCs voted for the Congress was usually determined by local campaigning efforts of OBC leaders like Chuggan Bhujbal and economic issues such as the failure of the state government to provide relief to Vidharbha farmers.

These shifts in OBC voters occurred simultaneously with a Dalit/Muslim move back to the Congress. Atrocities against Dalits, including a shooting in a slum in the Ghatkopar area of Mumbai which left 11 Dalit youth dead and other isolated incidents of violence, persuaded the politically active Dalit Buddhists and other Scheduled Castes to return in some numbers to the Congress fold. The Muslims also felt that given the choice between the Shiv Sena/BJP and the Congress, the latter, Mumbai riots notwithstanding, was perhaps a safer alternative.[21]

I have argued that the Congress–RPI–SP alliance and the shift in OBC and Dalit–Muslim votes facilitated the Congress victory. But these factors would not have been as effective if the Shiv Sena/BJP government had not created popular discontent by failing to fulfill election promises and engaging in petty corruption and extortion.

The Loss of Credibility of the Shiv Sena/BJP

Popular and publicized promises of the Sena/BJP state government included the Slum Redevelopment Plan, which would provide housing for a million slum dwellers, the provision of employment for Maharashtrian youth, and the Re. 1 meal project. The slum housing and employment plans were just as unsuccessful as the 'zunka bhakar' or Re. 1 meal project discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The slum housing development plan had become a quagmire of crossed purposes as land owners, developers, and the government were locked in a debate over the profitability and viability of providing subsidized housing, while the Congress opposition and critics accused the government of using this project to reward supporters by distributing land contracts.[22] Further, the government was/is supporting the demolition of slum buildings in areas dominated by lower-middle class Maharashtrians.[23] It can be perceived that the state government was acting in a hypocritical

manner by promising slum housing on the one hand and on the other destroying apartments that the lower-middle class have purchased with their life savings on the pretext that they were 'illegal' and 'violated building codes'. These actions had the potential of alienating a large percentage of the alliance government's support base: low and middle income, urban Maharashtrians.[24] Slums in the Cuffe Parade area in south Bombay have faced 43 demolitions to make way for a planned helipad for the transportation of VIPs. This is a project that the Congress government shelved because of local resistance. But the BJP/Sena is currently planning to proceed with the helipad.[25] Further, the 1996 Ramesh Kini case lingers in the minds of the citizens of Mumbai. Kini, a lower-middle class Maharashtrian man was found murdered in Pune. It is alleged that the owner of his apartment spoke to Raj Thackeray (Bal Thackeray's nephew) about removing the Kini family so he could use his building for more profitable purposes. As he had nowhere to go nor the money to afford another apartment, Kini refused to move. Allegedly, what followed was harassments and threats perpetuated by local Shiv Sainiks, culminating in Kini's death. This fact alienated many Shiv Sena voters as well as active Shiv Sainiks.[26]

If such a pattern of behavior continues, then it is only a matter of time before the image of the Sena or BJP as the champion of ordinary folk becomes tarnished. While the Congress retains a slightly higher level of voter support than the Shiv Sena/BJP among urban dwellers of all income levels, the alliance can little afford to risk the inroads they have made among these voters. Indeed, according to the 1995 exit polls, 32 percent of the voters supported the Congress in urban areas, but together, the BJP and Shiv Sena had the support of about 38 percent.[27] Further in 1995, 32 percent of middle and 41 percent of low income voters supported the Congress while the same figures for the Sena and BJP together were 46 percent and 22 percent respectively.[28] These figures imply that if the Sena/BJP government alienates its urban support, it risks electoral defeat in closely contested elections.

In addition to charges of non-performance, the Sena/BJP government has been accused of petty corruption. The perception in both urban and rural areas is that while the Congress indulged in corruption and nepotism, it never resorted to petty and vicious strategies. For example, it is alleged that in urban areas, Shiv Sena youth extorted money from lower, middle, and upper classes for religious festivals as well as for the protection of their apartments and cars.[29] Such activities under the aegis of the Sena/BJP government many have alienated

enough of their voters to ensure losses in certain urban constituencies. For example, Ramdas Athavale of the RPI, a party associated with politically conscious Buddhist Dalits, did not run from a Dalit-dominated constituency but from Mumbai North Central and defeated the incumbent Shiv Sena MP by a margin of 25,000 votes. Although there is a sizable number of Muslims, Buddhists, and other Scheduled Castes in this constituency, there are not enough to enable the victory of a candidate. Therefore, some of the Maharashtrian middle classes and castes—who tend to vote for the Sena/BJP—must have voted for this candidate, signifying a shift in their support.[30]

To sum up, the failure to fulfill election promises, actions such as slum demolitions, and the alliance government's delayed response to crop failures in Vidharbha as well as corruption created an atmosphere of resentment—in some areas—against the BJP/Shiv Sena that the Congress–RPI–SP alliance was able to draw on to cause crucial swings in OBC, Dalit, Muslim, and low and middle income non-Dalit votes and win. The regional voting patterns in this state further strengthens this argument.

The Elections in Regions of Maharashtra

Table 6.2 presents the regional distribution of votes in the 1996 and 1998 elections. It is obvious that the Congress dominates western Maharashtra while the BJP/Sena are dominant in Mumbai/Konkan. This regional distribution underlines two facets of electoral politics in Maharashtra: one, the total votes polled by the alliance is enough to contest Congress dominance, and two, that the BJP/Sena have to remain allied because each party on its own does not have enough popular support to challenge the Congress.

Mumbai/Konkan

In the 1996 election, the Shiv Sena won the constituencies of Mumbai NW, Mumbai SC, Mumbai NC, Rajapur, Thane, and Ratnagiri, while in 1998 it lost Mumbai NC.[31] As Table 6.2 shows, the Sena and BJP both increased their share of votes in this region. The elections in Kolaba and Mumbai SC constituencies are of interest because the Peasants and Workers's Party (PWP) won in the former while in the latter the Sena defeated the SP candidate by only 153 votes. The Congress

Table 6.2: Regional Distribution of Number of Votes Polled by Parties in the 1996 and 1998 Elections

Region	*Congress*			*BJP*			*Shiv Sena*		
	1996	*1998*	*% Change*	*1996*	*1998*	*% Change*	*1996*	*1998*	*% Change*
Mumbai/Konkan	1966481	2006120	2.0	1296782	1378417	5.9	1882232	2017109	6.7
North Maharashtra	1130163	1776636	36.4	1053388	1178765	10.6	295044	278908	−5.8
Vidharbha	2037953	2915464	30.1	1847937	2092546	11.7	907329	1095423	17.2
Marathwada	1471181	2597331	43.4	973562	1200014	18.9	934231	1154322	19.1
Western Maharashtra	3152495	4448678	29.1	1004743	1231244	18.4	753639	1644692	54.2

Sources: Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to the Lok Sabha 1996* (Mumbai; Government of Maharashtra, 1996) and Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to the Lok Sabha 1998* (Mumbai; Government of Maharashtra, 1998).

candidate from Kolaba, A.R. Antulay, who had won in the last election, this time, however, could not win because of a loss in popularity and lukewarm support from Congress activists in this area. Similarly, the Sena candidate could not inspire his activists, because both the Sena and BJP workers believed that he had not procured enough benefits for this constituency. This lack of support for the Congress and Shiv Sena enabled the PWP candidate, with his positive public image coupled with an effective grassroots campaign, to win.

The narrow margin in Mumbai SC is worrisome for the Sena since this is a constituency dominated by industrial workers and low income Maharashtrians who have helped Mohan Rawale of the Sena to win in 1991 and 1996. Although there is a sizable Muslim and Dalit Buddhist population in this area, it would be difficult for these communities on their own to facilitate a Congress victory. So some of the industrial workers and low/middle income Maharashtrians—traditional support for the Sena—for reasons already discussed must have voted for the SP to create such a narrow margin of victory for the Sena.

North Maharashtra

The Sena/BJP won all five constituencies in the last election, while in 1998 they only retained one seat. According to Table 6.2, the number of votes polled by the BJP and Congress increased in this election, while the Sena lost some of its votes. Three of the five constituencies in this area are reserved for Scheduled Tribes and enough of them voted for the BJP in 1996 to enable a BJP victory in all three reserved constituencies. Congress factionalism and popular disillusionment with its governance led to the Congress loss in constituencies where this party took Scheduled Tribe support for granted. But this time an unified Congress, dissension among the Shiv Sena and BJP workers as well as Scheduled Tribe dissatisfaction with the alliance government led to a Congress victory.[32] Erandol was the only constituency where the BJP won because its candidate had good relations with the Maratha–Kunbis who form 35 percent of the population.[33] In addition, Congress factionalism coupled with popular dislike of the Congress candidate also aided the BJP win.

Vidharbha

In 1996, the Sena/BJP won nine of the 11 constituencies in this area. In 1998, they lost all nine to either the Congress or the RPI. As Table 6.2

shows, all three parties increased the number of votes polled in this area. The Congress is in a relatively weak position in this area as its patronage network is not as strong as in western Maharashtra. Further, until the 1995 assembly election, the BJP had been an advocate of Vidharbha autonomy and this fact together with its mobilization at the grassroots have allowed the BJP to provide a strong challenge to the Congress in this area. But in the 12th Lok Sabha election, crop failures, its neglect of the Vidharbha autonomy issue and the strong united front of the Congress and RPI led to a loss of alliance seats.[34]

The RPI candidates' win in Akola, Chimur, and Amravati can be explained by the fact that Congress and RPI factionalism was temporarily checked and the RPI candidate received active support from grassroots workers. It should be noted that the RPI candidates, traditionally seen as champions of Dalit rights, must have received some votes from the Maratha–Kunbis or Brahmins or OBCs or some combination thereof. For example, in Akola, Dalit Buddhists comprise 17 percent of the population while similar figures for the Maratha–Kunbis, Muslims, and OBCs are 28 percent, 14 percent, and 6 percent respectively.[35] The RPI candidate polled 51 percent of the votes; this majority would not have been possible with the sole support of Dalit Buddhists and Muslims. So he must have received votes from the OBCs or the Brahmins who are also present here. It is unlikely that many Maratha–Kunbis voted for the RPI because of their suspicion of Dalit empowerment.[36] The same pattern of voting was found in Amravati and Chimur where the caste compositions are roughly the same. The Congress win in other constituencies in Vidharbha was facilitated by Sharad Pawar's intensive campaigning, Muslim and Dalit support as well as some Maratha–Kunbi votes.

Marathwada

Once again, as Table 6.2 indicates, all parties increased the number of votes polled in this area. Marathwada, like Vidharbha, is not an area where Congress has a strong network akin to the one in western Maharashtra. As mentioned earlier, since 1980, the Maratha–Kunbi vote in Marathwada has been divided between the Congress and BJP/Sena while many of the OBCs looked to the Sena/BJP as a political alternative. In 1996, the BJP/Shiv Sena alliance polled more votes than the Congress, but in 1998, even together, they could not surpass the

Congress total (Table 6.2). The BJP and Sena won six of the eight constituencies in Marathwada in 1996, while in 1998 the Congress won six out of the eight constituencies. Reasons for this include the return of some of the Maratha–Kunbi and OBC as well as the Dalit/Muslim votes to the Congress because of Sharad Pawar's campaigning.

The BJP and Sena workers could not replicate their effective grassroots campaign work of 1996 because they were divided by internal rivalries and in some areas RSS cadres worked against the alliance. The BJP win in Beed by a mere 6,000 votes was possible because this is the constituency of Gopinath Munde, the BJP deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, and the party fielded a Maratha candidate who has good relations with the Maratha–Kunbi community. The deputy chief minister's campaigning amongst his OBC community and the Maratha–Kunbi vote gave the BJP its slim margin of victory. But it must be noted that although Pawar was successful in reducing factionalism and uniting the Congress behind the official candidate, Patil, who is actually anti-Pawar, the RPI cadres did not campaign for the Congress but for the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), whose candidate won over 15,000 votes. It can be argued that the BSP may have attracted some of the Dalit votes that would have gone to the Congress. In Jalna, another constituency in this region, the BJP's margin of victory was only 1,800 votes because of similar reasons.

Western Maharashtra

The BJP/Sena alliance is aware that if it wants to consolidate its hold on Maharashtra, it has to make inroads into the cooperative sector of western Maharashtra which forms the main foundation of Congress power. But it has not been able to do so. Even in 1996, the Congress won nine of the 12 constituencies in this region and as Table 6.2 emphasizes, the Sena and BJP together could not garner more votes than the Congress Party. In 1998, although all parties increased their share of votes, once again, the Congress received more votes than the alliance and this party has actually increased the margin of difference from approximately 1.3 million votes in 1996 to 1.5 million votes in 1998 (Table 6.2). Further, in 1998, Congress regained the two seats it had lost in 1996.

The Sena won in Ahmednagar only because its candidate, a Congress defector, was a powerful sugar cooperative owner with strong local connections. Further, the Congress campaign was plagued by factionalism

and some of the Dalit/Muslim vote—which may have gone to the Congress—was siphoned off by the Communist Party of India candidate who received about 10,000 votes.

In 1996, Udayanraje Bhonsale, of Satara, a powerful local Maratha and a descendant of Shivaji, the folk hero of Maharashtra, polled 113,685 votes as an independent. It was argued that he received many of the votes that would have made a Congress victory possible. Although, this perspective may have some validity, there is also some truth to the belief that factionalism and apathy prevented the Congress from running an effective campaign to counter the Shiv Sena/BJP's efficient grassroots mobilization. This time around, Sharad Pawar unified the Congress and local workers ran an effective campaign. Udayanraje Bhonsale had joined the BJP and the Shiv Sena hoped that his support would make a victory possible. But a unified Congress and a popular candidate, as well as the fact that local BJP activists did not campaign for the Sena because of their dislike of the candidate, ensured a Congress victory.[37]

Having emphasized the Sena/BJP's lack of success in breaking the Congress hold on western Maharashtra, it also behooves us to note that the largest increase in the Sena's share of votes—54.2 percent—was in this region. At this point of time, an analysis of the implications of this increase can only be speculatory. Given the importance of the 'Marathaization' of the Sena and BJP, a reasonable explanation may turn on this phenomenon. Since Congress power in western Maharashtra depends on the Maratha-dominated cooperative network, it is possible that the shift of key Maratha leaders in this network to the BJP or Shiv Sena (e.g., Bhonsale and the candidate from Ahmednagar) enabled this increase in votes. If this trend continues, it is possible that the Sena/BJP may offer a real challenge to the Congress. On the other hand, it is just as possible that this increase is a one-time occurrence, will not be duplicated, and consequently is misleading in its portrayal of Sena strength in this region. The most reasonable explanation can only be uncovered by a time-series analysis of the increase in Sena votes spanning many Lok Sabha elections as well as in-depth study of local factors in this region, and this exercise is beyond the scope of this chapter.

This discussion of regional voting strengthens the argument made at the beginning of this chapter that the Congress–RPI–SP alliance, changes in caste voting, and the inability of the Shiv Sena/BJP government to implement election promises facilitated the Congress victory. At the same time, the percentage of popular votes received by the Shiv

Sena and BJP prevents any hasty conclusions about the return of Congress dominance in Maharashtra. Indeed, as Table 6.1 illustrates, the Congress and the alliance received roughly the same percentage of popular vote, approximately 43 percent, each. A similar equitable division of popular votes in the 1995 assembly and the 1996 Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra make it possible to infer that the voters of this state are suspicious of the Congress but cannot decide to give the alliance an overwhelming mandate. As the regional discussion highlighted, this indecisive voting pattern is determined mostly by party defections calculated to win a seat in parliament, strained relations between local party workers and candidates, and popular resentment stemming from immediate local issues such as the failure of the government to aid farmers or provide benefits in urban areas or check petty corruption, rather than long-term analysis of policy.

The focus on party alliances and caste voting seems to push ideological tensions to the background in this election. In other words, where was Hindutva or Hindu nationalism in these elections? It is tempting to argue that the centripetal forces of an electoral democracy have evened out the strident Hindu nationalism of the BJP and Shiv Sena. This is not completely true. The shifts in voting in Maharashtra indicate that if short-term economic or political benefits are in competition with an allegiance to Hindutva, the desire for benefits will win, and the Shiv Sena/BJP acknowledges this economic reality by keeping their active campaigning limited to promises of jobs and housing;[38] yet certain actions of these parties after the elections indicate that the emotional appeal of nationalism materializes in unexpected ways. The BJP's Hindu nationalism, especially at the center, has taken a nuclear turn while the Shiv Sena in Mumbai has embarked on the path of cultural censorship.

So Where is Hindutva?

After the elections, Mumbai papers reported that a number of Sena activists had disrupted a concert presented by Pakistani musician Ghulam Ali with cries of 'Hail Maharashtra'.[39] In an interview in *The Times of India*, Bal Thackeray's son, Uddhav Thackeray, responded to a question about the Sena government's refusal to make public the Sri Krishna Report on the Mumbai 1992–1993 riots, which allegedly implicates the Sena, by remarking, 'We did not start the riots of 1992–93. We

only retaliated so as to protect our people. We are not ashamed of defending our people. In fact, we will retaliate even harder if anybody tries to create trouble again. We are very clear about that.'[40] Further, the Sena visualizes the Sri Krishna Commission as a misguided administrative effort aimed at blaming Hindus for Muslim losses in the riots, when in actuality Hindus only retaliated out of desperation after they had tolerated many incidents of Muslim aggression.[41] Further, on May 26, painter M.F. Husain apologized to the Shiv Sena for his painting *Sita Rescued* which had been targeted by various Hindu nationalist groups as anti-Hindu.[42] These views and events, along with other attempts by the Sena to censor concerts and TV commercials on the grounds that they were immoral and anti-Hindu, once again revived the fear in Mumbai that Hindu nationalism would create a society intolerant of cultural diversity with the Muslims cast as the enemy of the Hindu nation. Consequently, such episodes force an examination of the location of Hindu nationalism in both the BJP's and Sena's politics during and after the elections.

The following is an excerpt from the BJP election manifesto:

> Diversity is an inseparable part of India's past and present national tradition. The BJP not only respects but celebrates India's regional, caste, ...linguistic, and ethnic diversity.... This rich tradition comprises not only the Vedas and Upanishads...but also the *Indian* [my emphasis] traditions of the Muslims, Christians, and Parsis.... The post-independence tendency to reject all ancient Indian wisdom in political life led to all pre-independence values and symbols—be it the idea of spiritual nationalism expounded by Swami Vivekananda or the concept of Ram Rajya articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, or the soul stirring 'Vande Mataram' song...as unsecular and unacceptable. The BJP rejects this attitude....[43]

The manifesto goes on to interpret nationalism as cultural nationalism based on the idea of 'one nation, one people, and one culture'. It is not clear who comprises the nation and what this monolithic culture looks like. But the manifesto goes on to state that the 'BJP is committed to facilitate the construction of a magnificent Shri Ram Mandir...in Ayodhya' and that 'Shri Ram lies at the core of Indian consciousness'.[44]

The reference to the link between Ram and Indian consciousness implies a conflation between Hinduism and India. Given this context, the description of Islam, Christianity, and Zorastrianism as 'Indian'

signals the incorporation of these traditions into an India that is Hindu. It may be argued that such a configuration of nationalism signifies the subordination of non-Hindu traditions to a monolithic Hindu nation constructed by the BJP's emphasis on mandir, saffron, and Ram. Similarly, in a document outlining its aims and objectives, the Shiv Sena states 'We are Hindustanis and therefore, "Hindu" is the belief of our party. We love Hindustan more than we love ourselves. Therefore, Shiv Sena's fight against anti-national forces shall be ceaseless'[45] and 'it will certainly be recorded in history that the Shiv Sena has moulded youth into a formidable force for fighting evil'.[46] The Sena is more explicit in its Hindu nationalism and the word 'fight' implies a more aggressive attitude. The phrases 'anti-national forces' and 'evil' are vague and can be used to refer to any community seen as the 'enemy' of the Hindu nation, and for the present, in the eyes of the Sena and BJP, this enemy is the Muslim.[47]

However, such references in the preamble were balanced by promises to strengthen industry, promote economic growth, and so on. Further, during the campaign, explicit references to Hindutva were muted while job development, provision of irrigation, and slum development were emphasized.[48] It can be argued that since people already knew their Hindu nationalist perspective, there was no need for the parties to reiterate it. But Hindutva may have been the glue that held the grassroots activists together and one of the attractions of the members of the Maratha–Kunbi caste to this alliance is their desire to preserve the status quo Hindu identity and not allow Dalits and Muslims to challenge their dominance based on a hierarchical interpretation of Hinduism.[49]

Hindu nationalism as presented by the Shiv Sena and BJP with its emphasis on the need to work for national security and to fight against anti-national forces may take a worrisome turn in light of India's nuclear tests. Will Hindu nationalism justify the use of nuclear weapons against 'the Muslim' (Pakistani) enemy? The Sena applauds India's nuclear tests: 'The most encouraging fallout of the N-tests is the upsurge of nationalism throughout the length and breadth of the country.... Those who have suddenly woken up to the Buddha's message of peace will do well to remember that this nation also has a glorious history of valour. Remember Mahabharat?'[50] The Sena enthusiastically interprets the nuclear tests as a show of national strength, and, indeed, common people and politicians from many non-BJP parties did applaud the nuclear tests as a show of national courage in face of American attempts to keep India out of the nuclear club.[51] After the explosions,

Mumbai was festooned with banners hailing Vajpayee and people were lining up at major commuter stations to sign petitions congratulating the BJP on its show of national strength.

This general euphoria must be framed by hard questions about the type of nationalism that the BJP is promoting, and the point of departure for such an examination is shaped by the tension between two general types of nationalism: civic nationalism and cultural nationalism. 'Bad' nationalism, which is termed 'cultural' nationalism in the wider literature and 'communalism' in India, refers to the exclusionary intolerance bred by a nationalism defined by religion or ethnicity or language which creates an us versus them mentality. In other words, I belong to nation A because I speak language A and belong to ethnic group A; you are by definition not A and cannot belong to A. Such uncompromising positions leave no room for negotiation and may breed violence. 'Good' nationalism, or 'civic nationalism' and 'secularism' in India, refers to liberal values of a tolerance of diversity, freedom, and rights which lead to a willingness to compromise and which may circumvent violence.[52] The BJP is usually seen as an adherent of 'bad' nationalism or communalism.

However, the general popularity of Vajpayee's nuclear move indicates that it is difficult to separate the two nationalisms, because one is faced with the dilemma of determining whether it is cultural or civic nationalism that motivates the widespread popular approval of nuclear tests. The outpouring of national pride may be read as an attempt to resist First World dictates regarding nuclear proliferation in developing countries. Nevertheless, as Pakistan's response and the examination of Hindu nationalism highlights, there is no doubt who the primary 'anti-national' forces are in the BJP's eyes. Against this context, it behooves us to query whether or not it is possible to distinguish the cultural nationalism that is perceived to be behind the celebration of a Ram mandir on the site of a destroyed mosque in Ayodhya from the nationalism that valorizes nuclear tests when India's traditional enemy is a neighboring Islamic nation.

It seems that whether or not the perceived 'anti-national forces' (read Muslim) of a self-defined Hindu nation lies within or without its borders is irrelevant, since the idea of Hindu dominance that animates this view of the nation does not change with the geographical location of the 'enemy'. To be fair, Vajpayee has prevented his supporters from distributing sand from the site of the nuclear explosion as holy relics, has not made any favorable comment on the VHP's attempts to Hinduize the

tests by building a temple at Pokhran,[53] and finally has chastised Pramod Mahajan when his former political advisor made provocative remarks about Pakistan. Further, there is little indication that these tests mean an inevitable nuclear 'weaponization' of India or the beginning of an arms race between India and Pakistan or that the BJP's Hindu nationalism must necessarily justify the use of violence (which may escalate to the use of nuclear arms).

However, given the past history of the BJP (and Shiv Sena)—the *ratha yatra*, Ayodhya, riots—a sense of discomfort about India's future is natural. One is left with questions that must shape future thinking about Indian politics: Will the BJP (and Shiv Sena) turn to emotive Hindu nationalism with its corresponding ideas of the Muslim enemy, which, in the past, has been successful in garnering popular support, if they see their popularity faltering? If, as many political observers predict, these nuclear tests were an attempt to bolster the BJP's image, what will such appeals mean in the context of the nuclear tests undertaken by India and Pakistan? At this point, it seems unlikely that the BJP will attempt to link weaponization and Hindu nationalism, but given India's volatile politics, it would be difficult to make definitive predictions about the future.

Conclusion

After suffering defeat in the 1996 Lok Sabha election in Maharashtra, the Congress regained its lost electoral dominance in the 12th General Election. The Congress victory was enabled by its electoral alliance with the RPI and SP, the Maharashtra Congress's ability to limit factionalism, as well as the changing patterns of OBC and Dalit/Muslim voting. However, these factors worked to create such a dramatic advantage for the Congress because the Shiv Sena/BJP government at the state level had failed to satisfy the immediate wants (i.e., jobs and housing) of many of their supporters and had condoned petty corruption, while grassroots workers of this alliance, because of internal dissension, could not mount local campaigns as effective as those of 1996.

Throughout the chapter, it has been emphasized that the proportion of popular votes polled by the Congress and the alliance were roughly equal not only in 1998 but also in 1996 and the assembly elections of 1995. Based on this trend, it seems reasonable to assert that the victory of one party or the other does not imply a drastic upswing in popular

support. Rather, India's first-past-the-post electoral system and regional variables, such as the popularity of a candidate, shifts in crucial OBC and Dalit/Muslim voting as well as the division of Maratha–Kunbi votes between the Congress and the BJP or Shiv Sena, determined electoral victory.

The BJP/Sena has by no means been decimated as a political force in Maharashtra. They will continue to pose a threat to Congress dominance, and if the right configuration of forces converge to create an anti-Congress feeling (for example, a perception that the Congress has failed to distribute adequate benefits or dissatisfaction among party workers), certain supporters of the Congress can now look to the Shiv Sena/BJP as a viable alternative. If these shifts happen in crucial numbers and regions, the Congress may once again lose.

Finally, this discussion is incomplete without a look at the position of Hindutva in the election. Although, the Congress was victorious in Maharashtra, at the national level, the BJP leads the government. Hindutva was not a very visible part of the campaign in Maharashtra, but it remains in the election manifestoes of the BJP and the Sena in the form of pledges to protect and defend India as a Hindu nation. The BJP's nuclear tests, the Sena's enthusiastic support as well as the general outpouring of national pride raises questions about a future where political pressures may wed an aggressive Hindu nationalism and nuclear weapons.

Notes and References

1. The research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the University of Lethbridge.
2. The MLA hostel is a residence for the use of members of the state legislative assembly when they are in Mumbai.
3. Tushar Gandhi (Samajwadi Party candidate), interview with author, Mumbai, May 5, 1998.
4. All election numbers, unless otherwise stated, are drawn from Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to the Lok Sabha 1996: Poll Statistics* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Government Press, 1996) and Maharashtra Election Commission, *General Elections to the Lok Sabha 1998: Poll Statistics* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Government Press, 1998).
5. Mahesh Gaveskar (journalist), interview with author, Mumbai, May 8, 1998; Chander Mishra (journalist), interview with author, Mumbai, May 25, 1998; and Rajendra Vora, 'Shift in Power from Rural to Urban Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, January 13–20, 1996.

6. Kumar Ketkar (journalist/editor), interview with author, Mumbai, May 15, 1998, and Gaveskar (Note 5 above). Various members of the Department of Political Science in Pune also alluded to this fact.
7. Tushar Gandhi, interview with author, Mumbai, May 5, 1998.
8. Kumar Ketkar, interview with author, Mumbai, May 15, 1998.
9. Suhas Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment of Realignment', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, January 13–20, 1996, p. 176.
10. Vora, 'Shift of Power' (Note 5 above), p. 172.
11. Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment' (Note 9 above), pp. 175–77.
12. *Ibid.*
13. According to H.D. Singh, *543 Faces of India* (New Delhi: Newsmen Publishers, 1996), these castes form 35 percent of the population of Maharashtra. Most of these patronage networks are based in the sugar cooperative system in Maharashtra which was created in the name of helping farmers, and some farmers with enough resources and access to irrigation did gain from these cooperatives. But gradually these cooperatives became dominated by rich farmers who established relations with the Congress Party and helped the party build a network of patron–client relations that became the foundation of Congress power in Maharashtra. Sugar barons either ran themselves in district, assembly, and parliamentary elections or supported clients who represented their interests. See Donald Attwood; *Raising Cane: The Political Economy of Sugar in Western Maharashtra* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), and B.S. Baviskar, *The Politics of Development: Sugar Co-Operatives in Rural Maharashtra* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980).
14. Vora, 'Shift of Power' (Note 5 above), p. 173.
15. Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment' (Note 9 above), p. 176.
16. Youth United for Voluntary Action (YUVA), *Anubhav*, May–June 1998, pp. 24–25. This is a Marathi monthly published by a non-profit agency. The May–June issue presented a constituency by constituency analysis of the election by drawing on information culled from Marathi and English newspapers. I had certain relevant sections translated in Mumbai.
17. Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment' (Note 9 above), p. 172.
18. Ram Joshi, 'Politics in Maharashtra—An Overview', in Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni (eds), *Politics in Maharashtra*, (Bombay: Himalaya, 1995), p. 13.
19. Mahesh Gaveskar, interview with author, Mumbai, May 8, 1998.
20. Suhas Kulkarni (journalist), interview with author, Pune, May 21, 1998; 'Credit Limits Farmer's Fortunes', *The Indian Express*, May 23, 1998; and 'Yavatmal Farmers Continue to Live in Debt Trap', *The Indian Express*, May 22, 1998.
21. P.G. Jogdand, 'RPI–Congress Alliance: Softer Option', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, May 9, 1998, pp. 1071–72.
22. 'Promises Unkept', *Bombay Times*, May 1, 1998; and 'Slum Redevelopment Scheme Fails to Meet its Ambitious Promes', *The Times of India*, Mumbai, May 23, 1998.
23. 'Families Watch Their Flats Being Dynamited by Demolition Squad', *The Times of India*, Mumbai, May 14, 1998.
24. Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment' (Note 9 above), p. 175.
25. 'Cuffe Parade Slums Razed', *The Indian Express*, Mumbai, May 23, 1998.
26. Pushpa Bhave (academic and activist), interview with author, Mumbai, June 24, 1997. See also 'Chargesheets Filed in Kini case', www.rediff.com/news/aug/29kini.html.
27. Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment' (Note 9 above), p. 175.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
29. I became cognizant of these allegations by speaking to many local journalists, academics, and ordinary citizens.
30. Singh, *543 Faces* (Note 13 above), p. 7; and Jogdand, 'RPI–Congress Alliance' (Note 21 above).
31. Except for the election statistics and some caste information which is referenced separately, the information about various regions and constituencies is drawn from *Anubhav*.
32. Jogdand, 'RPI–Congress Alliance' (Note 21 above).
33. Singh, *543 Faces* (Note 13 above), p. 165.
34. The BJP retreated from its advocacy of the Vidharbha autonomy issue because of the Shiv Sena's objections.
35. Singh, *543 Faces* (Note 13 above), p. 166.
36. Jogdand, 'RPI–Congress Alliance' (Note 21 above).
37. 'It's a Straight Fight between Sena and Congress in Satara', www.rediff.com/news/1998/feb/26satara.html.
38. See election promises made by these parties on their web sites: www.bjp.org/manifesto/chap1.html and www.shivsena.org/aims.html.
39. 'Gulam Ali Fiasco Marks Sena's Final Return to Saffron', *The Times of India*, Mumbai, May 3, 1998.
40. 'We Will Retaliate Even Harder if Anyone Tries to Create Trouble Again', *The Times of India*, Mumbai, May 3, 1998.
41. 'The Sri Krishna Report—To What Purpose', www.shivsena.org/thoughts.html.
42. 'Husain Apologises for *Sita Rescued*', www.rediff.com/news/1998/may/26husain.html.
43. www.bjp.org/manifesto/chap1.html.
44. www.bjp.org/manifesto/chap2.html.
45. www.shivsena.org/aims.html.
46. www.shivsena.org/thoughts.html.
47. Although it can be argued that perhaps the BJP is more sophisticated in its articulation of Hindu nationalism, nevertheless, its role in *ratha yatras*, the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya, and its close links to the RSS (the current BJP president is an active RSS idealogue) emphasize an implicit assumption of the Muslim enemy.
48. 'Crown of Thorns', *India Today*, March 16, 1998.
49. Jogdand, 'RPI–Congress Alliance' (Note 21 above); and my conversations with Dr. Jondhale of Pune University alerted me to this aspect of the Maratha attraction for the BJP/Sena.
50. 'Post N-Test Scenario', www.shivsena.org/thoughts.html.
51. 'Why India Loves the Bomb', *The Economist*, May 16, 1998; 'Over the Moon', *The Economist*, May 23, 1998; and 'Nuclear Afterglow', *India Today*, May 25, 1998.
52. For example the implicit assumptions in classic works such as Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1953). See also Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into New Nationalisms* (Toronto: Penguin, 1993).
53. *The Economist*, May 23, 1998; 'Jai Sri Bomb', *India Today*, June 1, 1998; and 'VHP to Build *Shaktipitha* in Pokhran', www.rediff.com/news/1998/may18bomb2.html.

7

The 12th General Election in Karnataka: The BJP Achieves its Southern Beachhead

Harold A. Gould

Two years can be a lifetime in the career of an Indian political party![1] I say this with reference to the fate of the Janata Dal (JD) in Karnataka, of course. In the 11th General Election in 1996, the party seemed to be on the threshold of a long and successful run as the dominant political force in this key southern state. In the 1994 assembly election, the Janata Dal broke the Congress' monopoly of power in the state. This was then parlayed into a spectacular success in the 11th General Election in which the JD routed the Congress. They won 16 Lok Sabha seats to Congress's five, making this the first time the latter had failed to win the lion's share of parliamentary seats in Karnataka since Independence. So successful had the JD been in 1996, in fact, that the United Front coalition of which it was a member, chose H.D. Deve Gowda as India's prime minister.

What seemed to be the key to the Janata Dal's rise were the following factors: (*a*) The party's principal faction leaders, especially Ramakrishna Hegde, H.D. Deve Gowda and S.R. Bommai, subordinated their mutual antipathies enough to assure a broad spectrum of support from the various status groups over whom they commanded influence. (*b*) The party evolved an ideological rubric under which these status groups

could form a loose confederation based on common class interests. (*c*) The party did a masterful job of building a grassroots apparatus which moved progressively from control of local bodies to control of the legislative assembly to victory at the parliamentary level. In the conclusion to the article I published on the 11th General Election, I stated that 'between their fall from power in 1989[2] and their emergence from the ashes in 1994, culminating in their success in the 11th General Election, the Janata Dal provides a classic illustration of how political machines are built.' However, I also noted that, 'The question now is whether the Janata Dal machine, once built, can long endure.' And finally:

> If the Janata Dal machine fails to sustain itself, and if this is combined with a collapse of the coalition government in New Delhi...it is well worth speculating as to whether the door would then be opened for the BJP to radically expand its now well established footholds in Karnataka. This might result in the first major penetration of the south for which the BJP has so long yearned.[3]

These concluding phrases proved to be highly prophetic. Not only did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieve its long-cherished goal of making a real impact south of the Godavari, but even the Congress made a qualified comeback. This is because the organizational unity that enabled the Janata Dal to build an effective state machine and ride to power on its wings began to disintegrate within days after its great victory. It was the primary reason why the BJP was able to seize the moment, expand its centers of power in the state, win 13 parliamentary seats in its own right (only three less than the JD had achieved two years earlier), and see its ally, the Lok Shakti, win three more, so that in the overall it completely reversed the magnitude of the Janata Dal's achievement in 1996. Moreover, this factional disarray enabled the Congress to double the number of seats it garnered (from four to nine), making it the second largest parliamentary group in the state, and relegating the JD to a feeble third.

This was a spectacular turnaround in such a brief span of time, especially where technically the JD continued to be dominant in the state assembly and at the local bodies' level. It raises a real question as to whether the party will be able to retain its hold on the state apparatus in the next round of provincial election scheduled to occur conjointly with the 12th General Election in September-October 1999. Unlike 1984, when the Janata Party (of which the Janata Dal is essentially the structural legatee), with Ramakrishna Hegde at the helm, dissolved the

government and called for new provincial elections after suffering a disastrous defeat in the parliamentary election, there is no indication that the present regime intends to go this route. This is despite the fact that the proportions of the recent defeat equaled that of its predecessor. In 1984, capitalizing on the sympathy wave that accompanied Indira Gandhi's assassination, Congress captured 24 of Karnataka's 28 parliamentary seats. In 1998, the BJP and its Lok Shakti ally, plus the Congress, won 25 seats.

My task in this chapter will be to try and account for the striking change of fortune experienced in negative terms by the Janata Dal and in positive terms by the Bharatiya Janata Party between 1996 and 1998.

Factional conflict, of course, was a major contributing factor in what occurred. Relations between Ramakrishna Hegde, S.R. Bommai, and H.D. Deve Gowda, three powerful Janata Dal faction leaders, have always been fragile. This has especially been the case between Hegde and Deve Gowda. Apart from their competitiveness with respect to control of political resources, there is clearly a personal incompatibility that runs very deep. They simply rub each other the wrong way. Hegde, the urbane Brahman with a flair for the flamboyant, views Deve Gowda as a wily rustic peasant and an intellectual second-rater. Deve Gowda, the Vokkaliga peasant farmer turned politician, sees Hegde as an intellectually arrogant elitist and a cunning political operator with ephemeral roots in the soil. Bommai, by contrast, has frequently found himself caught between these two power brokers and preoccupied with trying to engineer *modus vivendis* between them. All three, as well as other major faction leaders in Karnataka, have anchored the local structures of power from which they draw their political sustenance in the caste-based formations into which Karnataka, like all Indian states, is subdifferentiated.[4] In addition to the two megacastes which have tended to dominate Karnataka politics—viz., Lingayats and Vokkaligas—there are significant concentrations of other backwards (such as Idigas and Kurubas), Scheduled Castes, Muslims, and Christians. These latter, in fact, actually represent in the aggregate around 60 percent of the state's population.

Although a Brahman, Hegde's power base has always lain primarily in the Lingayat community, concentrated in the northern districts of the state. Deve Gowda's power base, of course, has always lain with the Vokkaliga community, concentrated primarily in the state's southern districts. In addition, S. Bangarappa, who has been a major player in Karnataka politics (Congress chief minister in 1990 and 1991), is of the Idiga, or toddy tapper, caste. Jaffar Sharief, a perennial power in the Karnataka Congress, has a powerful base in the Muslim community.

Class has also juxtaposed itself with caste in Karnataka as elsewhere, especially since the 1970s after Devraj Urs, like Charan Singh in Uttar Pradesh, successfully consolidated the backward castes into a self-conscious political force. This played an important role in subsequent assembly and parliamentary elections, a role which must be understood as a prelude to the outcome of the 12th General Election in 1998.

The 11th General Election

As suggested earlier, the Janata Dal succeeded in the 1994 assembly election and followed up this victory with a spectacular triumph in the 1996 parliamentary election primarily because it got its factional act together and effectively built a broad coalition of support across most of the state, which to an important extent assumed class dimensions. In effect, they constructed a political machine at the grassroots upon whose foundation they were able to first capture control of the state government and then parlay the wider spectrum of resources which this achievement opened up to them into a highly successful assault on the state's Lok Sabha seats.

In organizational terms, the key to the Janata Dal's success was the unexpected ability of the party's three most prominent factional leaders to subordinate their mutual antipathies to the larger good. The last time this had happened was in 1983, when Ramakrishna Hegde, S.R. Bommai, and H.D. Deve Gowda led the Janata Party in alliance with the BJP to a narrow victory over the Congress. The party won 95 seats, more than any non-Congress party had ever won before in Karnataka, and combined with the 18 seats won by the BJP, made it possible for Ramakrishna Hegde to become Karnataka's first non-Congress chief minister. It was clear that Hegde's organizational capabilities, charisma, and wide popularity throughout the state had been crucial factors in the outcome. Then came the Congress's victory in the 8th General Election followed by Hedge's decision to dissolve the legislative assembly and seek a fresh mandate. After much maneuvering on part of the Congress high command at the center, and within both the Janata and Congress Parties at the provincial level, the governor (Ashoke Nath Banerjee) finally acquiesced to Hegde's request to dissolve the assembly, but then appointed him head of the caretaker government that would hold power until the election was held.[5]

To everyone's amazement, the Janata Party won a smashing victory over the Congress. They got 44 percent of the vote and won 137 seats—

an absolute majority. It was the first major setback for the Congress since Rajiv Gandhi had assumed control of the party. The victory was widely acknowledged to have been Hegde's greatest political moment. 'Soon after he joined office [as acting CM], the Janata Legislature Party met in their dilapidated office in Bangalore and elected Hegde as its "undisputed leader" so as to present what J.H. Patel, the party's balding secretary-general, calls "a positive approach and a unified image to the people."' The purpose was 'to contrast it with the Congress (I) Party which was still haggling over the leadership issue.'[6] While this strategy worked and the Janata Party was able to enjoy almost a full term in office, eventually the factional bogey man struck once again, thus laying the foundations for eventual defeat.

A critical break occurred during the last year of the party's term, at the point where the Janata Party transformed itself into the Janata Dal, making it part of the emerging class-oriented national coalition of non-elite castes being assembled by V.P. Singh under the rubric of the Mandal/Mandir turmoil. H.D. Deve Gowda threw a monkey-wrench into the works by refusing to go along. Instead, he 'remained' in the Janata Party along with 27 mainly Vokkaliga MLAs, obviously for the purpose of using it as an ethnically structured base of operations from which to strike a deal with his political rivals. The move prompted a correspondent to refer to Deve Gowda as 'the wily H.D. Deve Gowda ...who has made dissent and factional politics the basis of his career...'[7] Bommai's government survived only for eight months following this cleavage. The 9th General Election followed. While the Congress lost its majority in the Lok Sabha (from 425 to 197 seats) to the Janata Dal (142 seats), and JD's coalition with the BJP (86 seats) enabled V.P. Singh to become Prime Minister, the Janata Dal in Karnataka was routed at both the assembly and parliamentary levels. The Janata Dal lost 113 assembly seats and received only 24 percent of the vote. The Congress won 178 seats and 44 percent of the vote. It was the largest number of assembly seats the party had ever obtained in the state's history! The Congress also won 27 of Karnataka's 28 Lok Sabha seats. The Janata Dal managed to win only one! Faction-driven disintegration enabled the Janata Dal to 'buck the national tide', as it were!

However, the Congress in its turn proved incapable of consolidating the political advantage it had achieved. This partly arose from the divisions that had arisen in the aftermath of the national party's defeat. As one of the few surviving Congress provincial machines, a host of provincial and national politicians sought to gain access to the political

resources it controlled for a variety of usual parochial reasons. The contest was joined almost immediately when the Karnataka Congress chose Veerendra Patil to be chief minister. Patil had been chief minister from 1968 to 1972, and as a leader of the powerful Lingayat community had always been a major force in state party affairs whether or not he occupied any public office. He had a reputation as an honest politician, an able administrator, and a person with an independent bent of mind. For these very reasons, Patil's emergence as chief minister once again did not sit well with the Congress high command in New Delhi. 'Mr Patil is no demonstrative loyalist of Mr Gandhi, and despite the reluctance of the Congress-I Working Committee to make bold and opt for a change at the top, he is most unlikely to put up any show [of] sycophancy.'[8] Patil was forced out of office in less than a year by the artifact of imposing President's Rule (October 1990) when he refused to succumb to pressure to resign. He was replaced a month later (November 1990) by S. Bangarappa.

Bangarappa proved to be a loose cannon and, in any event, a terrible choice from the standpoint of ethnic realities in Karnataka. He was, as noted, an Idiga, a backward caste whose traditional occupation was toddy tapping, something that neither of the state's megacastes (Lingayats and Vokkaligas) could accept with equanimity. Especially so when it became clear that Bangarappa was thoroughly corrupt and determined to ensconce his own followers and castemen in as many strategic positions in the state apparatus as he possibly could. His appointment in the first place had been Rajiv Gandhi's idea. To win the chief ministership he had depicted himself as an absolute Rajiv loyalist. 'I will seek his guidance for everything. I have total faith in him.'[9] Bangarappa's behavior produced such a backlash that two months after his installation (January 1991) he was removed and Veerendra Patil, at the insistence of the provincial party leadership, was brought back as chief minister. However, in the political vacuum following Rajiv's assassination in May 1991, on the pretext that Patil's failing health rendered him ineffective, Bangarappa was able to return to power and remain there until December of 1992. Once again, the Congress high command was compelled to remove him, this time replacing him with Veerendra Moily, another backward caste man. After his second demise as chief minister, Bangarappa defected to the Janata Dal, then left them to form his own party, the Karnataka Congress Party (KCP), thus guaranteeing that in the next round of provincial elections in 1994 he would siphon off votes from the Congress. As I put it in my article dealing with the 11th general

election, 'The spectacle of such bitter political infighting and chief ministerial musical chairs [Patil–Bangarappa–Patil–Bangarappa–Moily], combined with the perception of pervasive corruption that accompanied this turmoil, certainly played a significant role in creating the atmosphere of public disenchantment with the Congress that existed by the time of [the assembly election in 1994 and the 11th general election in 1986].'[10]

While the Congress was busy self-destructing once again, the Janata Dal was quietly moving in the opposite direction. Hegde, Deve Gowda, Bommai, and many other Janata Dal power brokers were gradually resolving their political differences, or at least suppressing them sufficiently, to enable them to work together effectively. Gradually they developed a strategy designed to maximize their organizational viability at the grassroots and achieve the widest possible appeal to the peasant cultivator castes (Lingayats, Vokkaligas, and others), to other backwards, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims. The design was to set them apart from the allegedly elite caste orientation of the BJP (which repelled Muslims, Scheduled Castes, and much of the middle peasantry) and the alleged corruption, disarray, and programmatic ineffectiveness of the Congress (which repelled almost everybody). In pursuit of this strategy, the JD leadership carefully polled the state's constituencies and assembled demographic profiles of each that identified the ethnic and class groups at the grassroots level which might be the most receptive to the party's ideology and material blandishments. Within realistic limits they then endeavored to give tickets to candidates with viable local support systems who could attract the widest possible spectrum of supporters among their targeted groups.

Another important achievement was resolution of the reservation issue to the advantage of the Janata Dal. This arose as much from the Congress' failures as from any explicit Janata Dal stratagem. All three Congress chief ministers between 1989 and 1994 had stalled and obfuscated on which caste groups and in what proportions would continue to enjoy reservations benefits. Three 'subcommittees' had been appointed to ostensibly try and resolve this issue. But all it led to was class anxieties within the backward and Scheduled Caste communities. This arose in response to the Supreme Court's validation of the Mandal Report with its recognition of a so-called 'creamy layer' among both backward and scheduled communities who were deemed ineligible for certain quota benefits because they had already come so far in *class* terms. For the most prosperous of the middle castes, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, this

posed a threat to their privileges. When on April 10, 1994, about 12 percent of the members of both castes were excluded from the benefits they raised such a howl of protest that Moily and his Cabinet were compelled to back down three months later (July 23, 1994) and in the end actually raise backward quotas from 50 to 57 percent across the board. However, this waffling unnerved the Lingayats and Vokkaligas who, despite getting their way on the issue, came away with a bad taste in their mouth about the Congress. It set them up to be responsive to the Janata Dal just as the 1994 assembly election was scheduled to commence, especially with the 'honorary Lingayat' Hegde (more about this presently) and the Vokkaliga *neta* (leader) Deve Gowda at the party's helm.

Added to the reservation anxieties was the communal issue. Since the commencement of the agitation over the Babri Masjid (which led to its destruction in December 1992), it was not only the BJP whom Muslims feared and distrusted, but the Congress as well. That is because the Congress, under both Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao, was perceived as having not only failed to stem the BJP's clamor for Hindutva but indeed to have tacitly abetted its rise in an effort to exploit the Hindu vote themselves. In Karnataka, the anti-Muslim climate created by the Hindu right had led to communal violence in Kolar and Channapatna towns in October 1990; also in Bhadravati, Bangalore, Mysore, Mangalore, and Ramanagaram. As one commentator put it, 'Hindus have become emotionally surcharged over the Ram temple while Muslims have developed a siege mentality.'[11] Because of rioting against Scheduled Castes in Badanavalu, Ummatur, Mysore, and Raichur, they too were restive in the face of the fact that these atrocities had occurred while the Congress held power in the state.

All of these factors, then, clearly militated in favor of a Janata Dal resurgence, and this indeed happened. As Table 7.1 reveals, the JD won 116 of the 224 assembly seats—a clear majority. The BJP came in second with 40 while the Congress was consigned by the voters to third place with only 35 seats. For the latter, it meant a loss of 143 seats—clearly a rout!

When caste demographics are factored into the equation, it is clear why any political party in Karnataka that hopes to be successful must attract significant sections of the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities into its fold. To this extent, the caste factor, and thus ethnically driven mobilization, plays a determinative role in how successfully coalitions based upon broader integrative principles, like class, can be achieved

Table 7.1: Results of the 1994 Assembly Election by Party and Parliamentary Constituency*

Parliamentary Constituency		*No. of Assembly Constituencies Won by Party*							*Total Seats*
No.	*Name*	*Con*	*JD*	*BJP*	*KCP*	*BSP*	*Oth*	*Ind*	
01	Bidar (SC)	1	3	2	1	1	–	–	8
02	Gulbarga	3	3	–	1	–	1	–	8
03	Raichur	1	6	–	1	–	–	–	8
04	Koppal	2	4	1	–	–	–	1	8
05	Bellary	3	3	–	–	–	–	2	8
06	Devanagere	1	3	1	2	–	–	1	8
07	Chitradurga	1	5	–	–	–	–	2	8
08	Tumkur	2	2	2	1	–	–	1	8
09	Chikballapur	1	5	–	–	–	1	1	8
10	Kolar	–	7	–	–	–	1	–	8
11	Kanakapura	–	4	3	–	–	–	1	8
12	Bangalore North	–	8	–	–	–	–	–	8
13	Bangalore South	1	2	4	–	–	1	–	8
14	Mandya	–	6	–	–	–	1	1	8
15	Chamarajananagar	–	7	–	–	–	1	–	8
16	Mysore	–	4	4	–	–	–	–	8
17	Mangalore	–	–	8	–	–	–	–	8
18	Udipi	3	2	2	1•	–	–	–	8
19	Hassan	2	5	1	–	–	–	–	8
20	Chikmagalur	2	5	–	–	–	–	1	8
21	Shimoga	1	1	4	1	–	1	–	8
22	Karwar	1	2	3	1	–	1	–	8
23	Dharwad South	1	6	1	–	–	–	–	8
24	Dharwad North	2	2	3	1	–	–	–	8
25	Belgaum	–	6	–	–	–	2	–	8
26	Chikkodi	2	6	–	–	–	–	–	8
27	Bagalkot	4	4	–	–	–	–	–	8
28	Bijapur	1	5	1	–	–	–	1	8
	Total	35	116	40	10	1	10	12	224

* This table is a slightly modified version of Table 11 (Performance of Various Communities and Castes) contained in the article by Sandeep Shastri, 'Karnataka: Emergence of a "Third Force"', *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 13–20, Vol. XXXI, Nos 2 and 3, 1996, pp. 153–59.

and sustained through time. Table 7.2 reveals that the combined numerical strength of the Lingayat and Vokkaliga castes (over 26 percent of the population), itself a formidable figure, translates into political clout that well exceeds their numerical weight when interlinked with economic power, extensive social networks, and ethnic solidarity. Constituting one-fourth of Karnataka's population, the two castes were

able to obtain more than half the tickets (Lingayats 28.4 percent, Vokkaligas 24.1 percent) allocated to candidates in the 1994 assembly election. Other communities in Karnataka must be courted as well, to be sure, since together they ethnically differentiate the remaining 74 percent of the population. Among them, Scheduled Castes (16.7 percent), Muslims (11.7 percent), and other backwards such as Idigas and Kurubas (perhaps 20 to 25 percent) are especially important. Courting them proved to be a vital aspect of the Dal's class-oriented strategy in fact. But in the end, without substantial support from the Lingayat and Vokkaliga megacastes, no form of coalition-building based upon class or any other universalistic integrative principle has any chance of succeeding in Karnataka.

Table 7.2: Caste/Ethnoreligious Community of Winning Candidates in the 1994 Assembly Election

Caste/Community	*Seats Won*	*Percentage of Seats Won*	*Percentage of State Population*
Lingayats	64	28.57	15.34
Vokkaligas	54	24.11	10.81
SC	35	15.63	16.72
ST	6	2.68	6.73
Brahmans	10	4.46	3.46
Muslims	6	2.68	11.67
Kurubas	10	4.46	6.28
Marathas	9	4.02	2.98
Idigas	4	1.79	2.31
Christians	0	–	1.54
Bunts	8	3.57	0.75
Kodavas	2	0.89	0.75
Others	16	7.14	20.66
Total	224	100.00	100.00

The Janata Dal's achievement in the assembly elections was a prelude for their victory in the 11th General Election. Apart from control of the legislative assembly, 116 assembly seats meant enhanced grassroots power in most of the state's districts. Districts are the administrative units where political parties interface with local power structures. Therefore, the larger the number of assembly segments a party controls within a district, the greater is its access to those elemental units of political aggregation that determine who voters vote for. From this standpoint, after 1994, the JD found itself in a commanding position in 14 of

Karnataka's 19 districts. Table 7.3 shows that within these 14 districts they ended up in control of 41 to 80 percent of the assembly segments, which they encompassed, while the BJP was the only other party that achieved this measure of local-level dominance—and this only in two districts (Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu). From the vantage of such intradistrict dominance, the Janata Dal was then able to mount an extremely effective campaign in the local bodies' election that followed in 1996, just prior to the general election. In the civic election held in January of that year, the Dal garnered 1,299 out of 3,697 municipal ward seats, almost as many as the Congress (783), the BJP (404), and the KCP (65) together. The party also did better than its rivals in the panchayat election held around the same time.[12]

Table 7.3: Percentage of Assembly Seats Won by Different Parties by District, 1994

Percentage of Seats Won Per District	*Number of Districts*			
	JD	*BJP*	*Con*	KCP
None	1	5	4	12
1–20 %	2	6	8	7
21–40 %	2	5	7	0
+40 %	14	2	0	0
Total	19	19	19	19

The parliamentary election that followed in 1996 proved to be the final phase in the reconstruction of the Janata Dal political machine. We have seen that they annihilated the Congress and basically held the BJP, which some thought might make a strong showing, at bay. This was true as far as Lok Sabha seats were concerned at any rate and paved the way for Deve Gowda's brief ascent to the prime ministership. In terms of vote percent, however, the election was much closer. The Janata Dal, the BJP, and the Congress were fairly close in terms of vote percentages (35.1, 25.6, and 31.0 respectively) which suggests that the Janata Dal not only needed to sustain the advantage it had achieved but to strengthen it further. As we shall see, however, this was not to be. But before addressing this matter, we must examine in some detail those aspects of the outcome of the 11th General Election that provide a basis for understanding the very different outcome that occurred a mere two years later.

Election behavior in Karnataka must be viewed in the context of four socio-economic regions into which the state is divisible. Each differs

significantly in terms of natural resources, climate, and geophysical features. Demographically, they differ with regard to the nature and juxtaposition of castes, cultural–linguistic groups, and religious communities. They differ in their degree of urbanization, the composition of the labor force, and in economic structure. These differences profoundly affect the strategies that political parties must employ to win votes in each. Briefly, these regions are:

Upper Region

This region comprises the constituencies of Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, Belgaum, Chikkodi, Bagalkot, and Bijapur. It borders both Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Although Maharashtrian and Telugu-speaking minorities are present, this is Lingayat country. In the seven parliamentary constituencies included here, Lingayats range between 20 and 28 percent of the population; Muslims constitute more than 10 percent and Scheduled Castes around 20 percent. Literacy rates (36.2 percent) are the lowest in the state and less than 10 percent of the workforce (7.9 percent) are in industry. Unlike the rest of Karnataka, agricultural laborers (51.9 percent) outnumber farmers (48.1 percent). Relations between the substantial Maharashtrian cultural–linguistic minority and the Kannadiga majority are especially a problem, fed by a long-simmering dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka over border delineation.

Coastal Region

This region comprises the constituencies of Udipi, Shimoga, Karwar, Dharwad South, and Dharwad North. In the constituencies of this region, there is greater ethnic balance among the principal hereditary status groups: Lingayats, Idigas, Brahmans, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims. There is no single megacaste that demographically towers over the others. Farmers outnumber agricultural laborers. Being a coastal region facing the Arabian Sea, commerce and industry are more developed than in the Upper Region.

Lower Region

This region comprises the constituencies of Kolar, Kanakapura, Bangalore North, Bangalore South, Mandya, Chamarajananagar, Mysore,

and Mangalore. Vokkaligas dominate the agrarian system in the Lower Region to a degree that is comparable to Lingayat dominance in the Upper Region. At the same time, trade, industry, and urbanization are more advanced here than in any other region of Karnataka. It contains Bangalore, the state's capital city, that is also India's 'silicon valley'—a center of high-tech industry and burgeoning population. It also contains the cities of Mysore and Mangalore. These factors actually give the region a kind of split personality. Prosperous (mainly Vokkaliga) cultivators make up 59 percent of the workforce while a comparatively high proportion of non-agricultural workers are found in industry (26.4 percent), trade (18.8 percent), and the services (14.7 percent). This means higher concentrations of Brahmans, Vaishyas, and other elite castes than in other parts of Karnataka—a demographic pattern that has proved helpful to the BJP's party building efforts.

East Central Region

This region comprises the constituencies of Koppal, Bellary, Devanagere, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Chikballapur, Hassan, and Chikmagalur. This region is 'inland', less urbanized, and semi-arid where agriculture is the dominant economic motif and irrigation water is the dominant preoccupation of the peasantry. There is a demographic split between Lingayats and Vokkaligas. In the four northern constituencies Lingayats are the numerically dominant megacaste (16 to 22 percent); in the four southern constituencies Vokkaligas are dominant (16–35 percent).

While local issues and personalities were highly important in influencing results in individual constituencies, it is evident that demographic and socio-economic differences between the four regions had a profound overall effect on the election's outcome. Table 7.4 depicts the relationship between election results and the demographic characteristics of each constituency and region.

Throughout the rejuvenation process that brought the Janata Party back from the grave as the Janata Dal, Ramakrishna Hegde's tactical and organizational capabilities played a central role. This itself was a comeback of sorts because he had suffered something of a fall from political grace following the disclosures in late 1985 that his son (Bharat) and nephew (C.M. Udayshankar) had colluded with C.P. Lakshman to swindle the latter's brother out of Rs 2.5 lakh which was paid by them as 'capitation fee' for securing a seat for his daughter, Sudha Satyanath,

Table 7.4: Results of the 1994 Assembly Election in Karnataka Grouped by Region and Parliamentary Constituency

Parties/Region/Constituency/ Party Winner	*Winning Party in 1996*	*Single Largest Caste (%)*	*No. of Assembly Seats Won*					
			Con	*BJP*	*JD*	*KCP*	*BSP*	*Ind/Oth*
Upper Region								
Bidar	(BJP)	Lingayat (23%)	1	2	3	1	1	–
Gulbarga	(JD)	Lingayat (23%)	3	–	3	1	–	1
Raichur	(JD)	Lingayat (20%)	1	–	6	1	–	–
Belgaum	(JD)	Lingayat (28%)	–	–	6	–	–	2
Chikkodi	(JD)	Lingayat (26%)	2	–	6	–	–	–
Bagalkot	(JD)	Lingayat (26%)	4	–	4	–	–	–
Bijapur	(JD)	Lingayat (26%)	1	1	5	–	–	1
Subtotal	N 56		12	3	33	3	1	4
	%		21.4	5.4	58.9	5.4	1.8	7.1
Coastal Region								
Udipi	(Con)	Idiga/Mus (12/14%)	3	2	2	1	–	–
Shimoga	(KCP)	Ling/Idiga (20/18%)	1	4	1	1	–	1
Karwar	(BJP)	Ling/Idiga (9/11%)	1	3	2	1	–	1
Dharwad South	(Con)	Ling/Mus (17/15%)	1	1	6	–	–	–
Dharwad North	(BJP)	Ling/Mus (17/16%)	2	3	2	1	–	–
Subtotal	N 40		8	13	13	4	0	2
	%		20.0	32.5	32.5	10.0	–	5.0

Lower Region								
Kolar	(Con)	Vokka/SC (21/27%)	–	–	7	–	–	1
Kanakapura	(JD)	Vokka/SC (25/20%)	–	3	4	–	–	1
Bangalore North	(JD)	Vokka/SC/Mus (20/20/17%)	–	–	8	–	–	–
Bangalore South	(BJP)	Mus/Xians (12/8%)	1	4	2	–	–	1
Mandya	(JD)	Vokkaliga (45%)	–	–	6	–	–	2
Chamarajananagar	(JD)	Vokka/SC (17/23%)	–	–	7	–	–	1
Mysore	(Con)	Vokkaliga (17%)	–	4	4	–	–	–
Mangalore	(BJP)	Idigas/Mus (18/14%)	–	8	–	–	–	–
Subtotal	N 64		1	19	38	0	0	6
	%		–	29.7	59.4	–	–	9.4
East Region								
Koppal	(JD)	Lingayat (22%)	2	1	4	–	–	1
Bellary	(Con)	Lingayat (20%)	3	–	3	–	–	2
Devanagere	(BJP)	Lingayat (21%)	1	1	3	2	–	1
Chitradurga	(JD)	Ling/SC (16/22%)	1	–	5	–	–	2
Tumkur	(JD)	Vokkaliga (21%)	2	2	2	1	–	1
Chikballapur	(JD)	Vokka/SC (16/23%)	1	–	–	5	–	2
Hassan	(JD)	Vokkaliga (35%)	2	1	5	–	–	–
Chikmagalur	(JD)	Vokkaliga (19%)	2	–	5	–	–	1
Subtotal	N 64		14	5	27	8	0	10
	%		21.9	7.8	50.0	4.7	–	15.6
Upper Region	(56)		12	3	33	3	1	4
Coastal Region	(40)		8	13	13	4	0	2
Lower Region	(64)		1	19	38	0	0	6
East Central Region	(64)		14	5	32	3	0	10
Total	N 224		35	40	116	10	1	22
	%		15.6	17.9	51.8	4.5	0.5	9.8

in Belgaum Medical College. When it turned out that the money had disappeared, no seat had been secured, and the culprits were denying everything, the alleged victim filed a case which finally forced the chief minister, after first pooh poohing the charges, to initiate a judicial inquiry. Despite his public pledge to pursue the truth in this case, the fact that his own kin were involved left a bad taste in the public's mouth, energized his political enemies (like A.K. Subbiah), and for a time inhibited Hegde's political effectiveness. But by the 1990s he was on the comeback trail.

His greatest coup was bringing H.D. Deve Gowda back into the party fold, for this enabled the party to bring the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities into the broad coalition of cultivators, Schedules, and Muslims that the party was striving to create. Deve Gowda was the key to attracting Vokkaligas into the fold. Hegde himself was the key to drawing in the Lingayats.

This is because Ramakrishna Hegde, although a Brahman, had in a sense become an 'honorary' Lingayat. There is a long history behind this that dates back to the time when he became a protégée of Karnataka's most famous and revered Lingayat politician, S. Nijalingappa. When Nijalingappa became Congress chief minister in 1962, he appointed Hegde as his finance minister at the age of 25. This was a credential which Hedge cultivated and reinforced throughout his subsequent political career. In most recent times, Hegde was further aided in maintaining his standing among Lingayats by the decline and demise of Veerendra Patil. Strongly admired for his vigor, integrity, and political skill, Patil's departure from the scene left a vacuum in Lingayat leadership which Hegde was eminently qualified, and eager to fill.

The outcome of the 11th General Election reveals how rich were the dividends this merger of political heavyweights yielded. In the Upper Region, the Lingayat heartland, the Janata Dal won six of the seven constituencies. They lost only in Bidar, to Ramchandra Veerappa, a BJP stalwart who has held the seat since 1991. In the East Central region, where four constituencies are demographically dominated by Vokkaligas (Tumkur, Chikballapur, Hassan, and Chikmagalur) and four by Lingayats (Koppal, Bellary, Devanagere, and Chitradurga), the JD won six of eight. In all, out of 10 constituencies where Vokkaligas are either numerically dominant or share numerical dominance with another hereditary status group (mainly Scheduled Castes and in one case Muslims as well), the JD was successful in eight. In 10 constituencies where Lingayats alone are numerically dominant, the JD also won eight. Thus,

in all 16 constituencies won by the Janata Dal, Lingayats and Vokkaligas are either the largest single caste or, in some cases, share demographic dominance with either Scheduled Castes (Kanakapura, Chamarajanagar, and Chitradurga) or a combination of both Scheduled Castes and Muslims (Chikballapur and Bangalore North). This admixture of the state's two megacastes with Scheduled Castes and Muslims was the formula that brought victory to the Janata Dal.

In the constituencies where this mix did not prevail, the Janata Dal performance was not overly successful. The Coastal Region is the best illustration of this. There, Lingayats are an ethnic presence but not as much as in the Upper Region and the northern reaches of the East Central region. There is no Vokkaliga dominance in this region. Idigas (Shimoga and Karwar) and Muslims (Udipi, Dharwad South, and Dharwad North) are their demographic equals. On top of this, Brahmans and traders are in greater abundance. Since S. Bangarappa is an Idiga and his home constituency is Shimoga, it is no surprise that he won there under his KCP banner. But the Congress (Udipi and Dharwad South) and the BJP (Karwar and Dharwad North) won all the rest. In this instance, without a strong Lingayat or Vokkaliga presence to provide a political haven, the Muslim vote drifted toward the Congress camp.

Congress won in the Kolar constituency where its strength among Scheduled Castes and gold-field laborers held up sufficiently to pull it through. In Udipi, the Congress won because it had a strong candidate, Oscar Fernandes, who has been the incumbent there since 1980. But even he barely got past his BJP rival by a mere 1,500 votes. In only two other constituencies (Dharwad South and Mysore) was the Congress able to survive its factional disarray and pull out slim victories.

The BJP, meanwhile, garnered at least one parliamentary seat in each region of the state. One (Bidar) in the Upper Region, two (Karwar and Dharwad North) in the Coastal Region, two (Bangalore South and Mangalore) in the Lower Region, and one (Devanagere) in the East Central Region. In addition, they finished second in two other Coastal Region constituencies (Udipi and Shimoga), two more in the Upper Region (Gulbarga and Bijapur), and one more (Tumkur) in the East Central Region. This left them, after the 11th General Election, with several positions of strength scattered around Karnataka which could redound to the BJP's benefit if for any reason the Janata Dal coalition failed to hold together.[13]

The 12th General Election

Indeed, the Janata Dal did fail to hold together for the 12th General Election and the BJP was truly the beneficiary of this failure. The signs of disintegration began to appear with remarkable speed. No sooner had the 11th General Election ended than Hegde and Deve Gowda commenced snapping at each other. When signs emerged that Deve Gowda might be anointed prime minister by the victorious United Front, Hegde made public his opinion that Deve Gowda was a person of limited intellect. Not long afterward, Deve Gowda had Hegde expelled from the party for 'disloyalty'. Hegde retreated into the political background and commenced planning his political revenge. The opportunity arrived when the United Front government lost its majority (after Sitaram Kesri withdrew Congress outside support) and a new election had to be called.

Ramakrishna Hegde took two actions in preparation for contesting the 12th General Election. First, he formed a new party in Karnataka, calling it the Lok Shakti. Second, he forged an alliance with the BJP. With this alliance in place, the two parties worked out seat adjustments so that in each constituency there would be a 'straight-up' fight between them and their two principal adversaries—the Congress and the Janata Dal. The conjoining of Hegde's newly spawned Lok Shakti with the BJP offered the latter a golden opportunity to at last make inroads into Karnataka's megacaste vote banks. Obviously, their principal target would be the Lingayats, both because Hegde was now prepared to use his authority and influence with the Lingayat community to draw them out of the JD camp and into the BJP camp, and because the BJP leadership was prepared at last to combine their characteristic socio-religious appeal to the electorate with an explicitly agrarian strategy.

B.S. Yediyurappa, BJP state president and leader of the opposition in the state assembly, had long advocated reaching out to farmers, most particularly to the Lingayats, because they were the largest and most powerful ethnic bloc in the countryside and because he was himself a member of that caste. With Ramakrishna Hedge on board, the time seemed especially ripe. If the Lingayats could be separated from the Janata Dal coalition, the thinking went, this change alone in the caste equation in Karnataka should enable the BJP to make significant gains.

Table 7.5 shows the relationship between the 12th General Election's outcome and caste demography in each constituency. The summaries at the bottom of the table consolidate the data pertaining to each of the

Table 7.5: The 12th General Election, Karnataka 1998: Party Performance by Constituency

Constituency & Region	*Largest Caste/s*	*Winner (1998)*	*% of Vote*	*2nd Place (1998)*	*Winner (1996)*	*% of Vote*	*Margin of Victory (1998)*
Upper Region							
Bidar	Lingayat (23%)	BJP	52.1	JD	BJP	49.9	184600
Gulbarga	Lingayat (23%)	BJP	43.8	JD	JD	36.8	132469
Raichur	Lingayat (20%)	Con	43.5	JD	JD	46.3	78278
Belgaum	Lingayat (28%)	BJP	44.4	Con	JD	NA	97057
Chikkodi	Lingayat (26%)	LS	51.9	Con	JD	56.5	131238
Bagalkot	Lingayat (26%)	LS	48.7	Con	JD	39.0	83032
Bijapur	Lingayat (26%)	Con	39.9	BJP	JD	37.6	52822
Coastal Region							
Udipi	Idiga/Mus (12/14%)	BJP	50.3	Con	Con	38.0	56568
Shimoga	Ling/Idiga (20/18%)	BJP	44.8	Con	KCP	43.2	159721
Karwar	Ling/Idiga (9/11%)	BJP	49.7	Con	BJP	44.2	87047
Dharwad South	Ling/Mus (17/15%)	LS	45.7	Con	Con	33.1	86962
Dharwad North	Ling/Mus (17/16%)	BJP	48.9	Con	BJP	40.1	129182
Lower Region							
Kolar	Vokka/SC (21/27%)	Con	39.0	JD	Con	44.4	77972
Kanakapura	Vokka/SC (25/20%)	BJP	38.3	Con	JD	42.4	16441
Bangalore North	Vokka/SC/Mus (20/20/17%)	Con	41.5	LS	JD	49.4	75775
Bangalore South	Mus/Xians (12/8%)	BJP	53.9	Con	BJP	35.6	109759
Mandya	Vokkaliga (45%)	JD	54.3	Con	JD	46.0	180523
Chamarajananagar	Vokka/SC (17/23%)	JD	45.6	Con	JD	31.5	70319
Mysore	Vokkaliga (17%)	BJP	41.5	Con	Con	35.6	102024
Mangalore	Idiga/Mus (18/14%)	BJP	47.7	Con	BJP	37.3	6907

Table 7.5 continued

Table 7.5 continued

Constituency & Region	*Largest Caste/s*	*Winner (1998)*	*% of Vote*	*2nd Place (1998)*	*Winner (1996)*	*% of Vote*	*Margin of Victory (1998)*
East Central Region							
Koppal	Lingayat (22%)	Con	39.9	JD	JD	31.7	83122
Bellary	Lingayat (20%)	Con	38.6	LS	Con	45.3	63738
Devanagere	Lingayat (21%)	Con	41.5	BJP	BJP	37.7	11332
Chitradurga	Lingayat/SC (16/22%)	Con	42.2	LS	JD	36.5	58843
Tumkur	Vokkaliga (21%)	BJP	44.9	Con	JD	29.1	71187
Chikballapur	Vokka/SC (16/23%)	Con	43.8	JD	JD	44.2	126631
Hassan	Vokkaliga (35%)	JD	38.9	Con	JD	42.1	31654
Chikmagalur	Vokkaliga (19%)	BJP	43.5	Con	JD	31.6	52946
Upper Region	Lingayat: 7	BJP–LS: 5/CON: 2			BJP: 1/JD: 6		
Coastal Region	Ling: 4/Idiga: 3/Mus: 3	BJP: 4/LS: 1			BJP: 2/Con: 2/KCP: 1		
Lower Region	Vokk: 6/SC: 4/Mus: 2/X: 1	BJP: 4/Con: 2/JD: 2			BJP: 2/Con: 2/JD: 4		
East Central Region	Ling: 4/Vokk: 4/SC: 2	BJP: 2/Con: 5/JD: 1			BJP: 1/Con: 1/JD: 6		

four regions. We see that in all four, compared with 1996, the JD was the big loser and that both the BJP and the Congress profited from their decline. Especially striking is the change that occurred in the Upper Region where Lingayats are numerically dominant in all seven Lok Sabha constituencies. In 1996, the Janata Dal, with Hegde in the fold, won six of seven constituencies. Without him, the Janata Dal was shut out in this region in 1998. The BJP–Lok Shakti allies won five and the Congress won two. The change was just as dramatic in the East Central region. There, where half of the eight constituencies are numerically dominated by Lingayats and the other half by Vokkaligas, the JD captured six of the eight seats in 1996 but only one in 1998. This time, the Congress won five and the BJP two. Thus, in these two regions, where Lingayats are the largest single caste in 11 of 15 constituencies and Vokkaligas are dominant in the other four, 12 Janata Dal incumbents lost their seats! The Janata Dal survived only in Deve Gowda's constituency (Hassan), in one constituency (Mandya) which has the largest concentration of Vokkaligas (45%) in the state, and in another (Chamarajananagar) where Vokkaligas and Scheduled Castes together comprise about 40 percent of the population.

In all, it is apparent that the Deve Gowda faction did not fare well even within their presumptive ethnic base—the Vokkaliga caste. Splits had developed among them which rebounded to Deve Gowda's disadvantage. In his own constituency of Hassan, where he received 57.6 percent of the vote in 1996, he won by a margin of less than 32,000 votes (38.9 percent of the vote) over his nearest opponent, Congressman H.C. Shreekant (alias Annaiah). Shreekant was treated as a 'throw-away candidate' by the Congress high command because it was thought that the party stood no chance whatsoever against the former prime minister. A political lightweight with a lot of money but questionable character, Shreekant, as one informant put it, 'did not lift a finger, so convinced was he that his defeat was a foregone conclusion.' In retrospect, he said he regretted not having put his heart into the campaign, for if he had he might well have won! In Chikmagalur, the JD incumbent, B.L. Shankar, saw his vote percent cut in half (from 31.6 percent to 16.4 percent) and himself relegated to third place in the contest. Shankar was closely identified with Deve Gowda in party affairs. In Chitradurga constituency, the Janata Dal's decline and fall typified the factional disarray which had so rapidly afflicted the party. In 1996, the Dal's candidate was P. Kodandaramaiah. Despite what he claims were promises 'time and time again that the prime minister and the national president

of the party had assured him of the ticket, the high command was not in a position to ignore the strong opposition of local leaders to making [him] the official nominee of the Janata Dal.'[14] Instead, they preferred Minor Irrigation Minister Thippeswamy, who was duly awarded the Chitradurga ticket. Kodandaramaiah wanted to defect to the Congress but backed down when Sonia Gandhi emerged as the Congress' great white hope because 'Mr. Kodandaramaiah...had always opposed dynastic rule.' Therefore, he 'was left with no option but to join the Lok Shakti'. In other words, Kodandaramaiah transferred his local structure of power to whichever venue welcomed him.[15] This spelled defeat for Thippeswamy, in part because, 'in Chitradurga, unfortunately, Mr. Deve Gowda has more rivals than friends' and in part because he made himself part of the Hegde factor which split the ostensible Janata Dal vote around Karnataka and brought down several Janata Dal incumbents.[16]

Generally speaking, in 10 constituencies where Vokkaligas were fully or partially numerically dominant and where JD candidates had won eight seats in 1996, this time they won only three.

How potent was the Hegde factor in determining the fate of the Janata Dal in the 12th General Election? Table 7.6 tells the story. The Lok Shakti contested 10 constituencies. It won outright in three. In seven of these constituencies, Lingayats were either numerically dominant or shared it with Scheduled Castes and/or Muslims. In three others, Vokkaligas enjoyed or shared dominance with Scheduled Castes and/or Muslims. In nine of these constituencies, the Hegde factor made the difference between victory and defeat for the Janata Dal. In other words, Hegde in concert with Yediyurappa successfully shattered the Lingayat–Vokkaliga axis that had been a decisive factor in the Janata Dal's ascent to power in both the 1994 assembly election and the 1996 General Election. For in all of these constituencies, except one, the combined vote of the LS and the JD exceeded that of the winning party.

Ironically, however, the only three constituencies which the Hegde factor delivered into the BJP column were the three which his Lok Shakti party won. The other six resulted in defeats for the Janata Dal, which clearly helped the BJP surge, but in each of these instances the immediate beneficiary was the Congress. One might put it that by his vote-splitting, Hedge prevented the JD from winning in the constituencies which his party contested but did not deliver victories to the BJP in these constituencies. This provided a net advantage for the BJP rather

Table 7.6: The 'Hegde Factor' in the 12th General Election, Karnataka 1998

Constituency	*Winning Party*	*% of Vote*	*2nd Party*	*% of Vote*	*3rd Party*	*% of Vote*	*Winner (1996)*	*Dominant Caste/s*
Raichur	Con	43.5	JD	30.6	LS	19.9	JD	Ling (20%)
Chikkodi	LS	51.9	Con	33.0	JD	11.0	JD	Ling (26%)
Bagalkot	LS	48.7	Con	37.1	JD	11.2	JD	Ling (26%)
Dharwad South	LS	45.7	Con	33.6	JD	17.7	Con	Ling/Mus (17/15%)
Bangalore North	Con	41.5	LS	34.0	JD	21.5	Con	Vokk/SC/Mus (20/20/17%)
Chamarajananagar	JD	45.6	Con	36.2	LS	10.1	JD	Vokk/SC (17/23%)
Koppal	Con	43.8	JD	28.3	LS	24.2	JD	Ling (22%)
Bellary	Con	38.6	LS	29.9	JD	25.3	Con	Ling (20%)
Chitradurga	Con	42.2	LS	34.5	JD	20.1	JD	Ling/SC (16/22%)
Chikballapur	Con	43.8	JD	28.3	LS	24.8	JD	Vokk/SC (16/23%)

than a direct advantage. It may be part of the reason why cracks are already appearing in the Hegde–BJP alliance.

Note in Table 7.7 that the process of major adversaries killing each other off continued outside the domain of the Hegde factor. The Congress won three more constituencies (Bijapur, Kolar, and Devanagere) where both the JD and the BJP attracted a substantial plurality of voters. The circumstances under which the Congress nearly doubled its number of Lok Sabha seats from five in the 11th General Election to nine in the 12th cannot be viewed as a political 'comeback' for the party. On its own, the Congress succeeded in holding onto two (Kolar and Bellary) of the five seats (Udipi, Dharwad North, and Mysore) it won in 1996. Even Bellary is an ambiguous case inasmuch as the Congress probably retained the seat only because the LS siphoned off almost 30 percent of the votes, most of which might otherwise have gone to the Janata Dal. It can be argued, therefore, that all of the seven that it added to those two, plus even one of the two 'holds', were essentially won by default, thanks either to the Hegde factor, which enabled it to hang onto one and win five others, or to those instances where the JD and BJP tended to cancel each other out.

Table 7.7: When Congress Won by 'Default' in the Absence of the 'Hegde Factor' in the 12th General Election, Karnataka 1998

Constituency	*Winning Party*	*% of Vote*	*2nd Party*	*% of Vote*	*3rd Party*	*% of Vote*	*Aggregate of 2nd/3rd Party Votes*
Bijapur	Con	39.9	BJP	31.9	JD	23.1	55.0
Kolar (SC)	Con	39.0	JD	29.0	BJP	28.9	57.9
Devanagere	Con	31.5	BJP	40.2	JD	12.0	52.2

Conclusion

The most important outcome of the 12th General Election in Karnataka was the opportunity it provided for the BJP to make its first significant political inroad into south India. Until now, it could be said that despite its pretensions of being a national party, the fact is that it was at best a large regional party anchored in the Hindi heartland. That changed when the BJP, with a major assist from Ramakrishna Hegde, essentially routed the Janata Dal in Karnataka. This door was opened by the factional disintegration of the JD almost at the very moment when it

scaled the heights of organizational revitalization and seemed destined to enjoy a long tenure of comprehensive political dominance in the state. In this sense, the Janata Dal repeated the pattern it followed after its previous ascent to power under the rubric of the Janata Party. After having displaced the Congress in the 1983 state election in alliance with the nascent BJP, and then increasing its advantage in 1985 following Hegde's decision to dissolve the legislative assembly after the Congress victory in the 8th General Election, factional conflict did in the Janata Dal once again in 1989.

From 1989 to 1994, the Janata Dal's factional leaders struggled to rebuild their fortunes. Essentially this meant finding ways by which the leaders of the state's two megacastes could be brought back into a mutually acceptable political relationship and linked with other backwards, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims on the basis of convergent class interests. Accomplishing this depended more than anything on achieving reconciliation between Ramakrishna Hegde, the party's bridge to the Lingayat community, and H.D. Deve Gowda, its bridge to the Vokkaliga community. With this critical consolidation in hand, the JD systematically built a political machine that carried it from success in the 1994 assembly election, through comparative success in the local-level election of early 1996, to victory in 16 of the state's 28 Lok Sabha constituencies in the 11th General Election. At the same time, during this period, the BJP was building centers of grassroots power in several strategic venues around the state, thereby positioning itself to take advantage of any opportunities presented to it for expanding its political influence. That opportunity was presented by the resumption of the factional cleavage between Hegde and Deve Gowda, which meant a parting of ways of the Lingayat and Vokkaliga castes.

The outcome of the election, in terms of numbers of parliamentary seats won, was determined by the Hegde-engineered defection of the Lingayats from the Janata Dal coalition and their delivery to the BJP coalition via his impromptu Lok Shakti party. This process was abetted by a modification in the BJP's own stratagems that was inspired primarily by the party's state president and opposition leader B.S. Yediyurappa. Himself a Lingayat, Yediyurappa persuaded his partymen to adopt a more up-front 'agrarian strategy' designed to emphasize BJP's identification with farmers' interests and concerns. Packaging the caste and class factors with BJP's standard Hindutva appeal proved to be an effective means of enticing the strongly upwardly mobile Lingayats to change sides. The result was to break down the long standing reticence

toward the party which south Indians had thus far tended to regard as a symbol of Brahman and Hindi belt cultural imperialism.

Whether this southern penetration can be sustained depends, of course, upon how effectively the BJP in its turn is able to hold its act together. The next round of assembly elections will no doubt provide the acid test.

Notes and References

1. This chapter continues a study of electoral politics that began at the time of the 11th General Election in 1996 in Karnataka. The original project was supported by funds from the Office in International Relations of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, and thanks are owed to Ms Francine Berkowitz, the Director, for her encouragement of this research. I also wish to thank Mr Sudhakar Rao, Minister of Economic Affairs at the Embassy of India in Washington, DC, for the valuable assistance he provided in obtaining data on the 12th General Election. The project director for the 1996 study was Harold A. Gould. The resulting study was published as a series in the *Economic and Political Weekly* during the Fall of 1997. The present phase of the project is being directed by Paul Wallace.
2. Previously, the Janata Party, the predecessor of the Janata Dal, had displaced the Congress in the 1983 state election. This had been the achievement of Ramakrishna Hegde who became Karnataka's first non-Congress chief minister. The Janata Party won again in 1985, this time with S.R. Bommai at the helm, and remained in power until factional disarray enabled the Congress to come back in 1989.
3. Harold A. Gould, 'General Elections, 1996: Karnataka, Decline and Fall of the Congress Machine', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 13, Vol. XXXII, No. 37, 1997, pp. 2335–49.
4. For a comprehensive analysis of the role of ethnicised hereditary status groups in grass-roots Indian politics, see Harold A. Gould, *Grass-Roots Politics in India: A Century of Political Evolution in Faizabad District* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH, 1994).
5. The tactical issue was whether the governor might ask the Congress to try and form a government rather than go for assembly dissolution and a new election. Hegde actually preferred this because he felt a Congress government dependent upon defectors would benefit the Janata Party in the long run by exposing the weaknesses and incompetence of such a patchwork government. There was division in the Congress whether to go this route. 'While the leader of the opposition, Veerappa Moily, and state Congress (I) chief K.H. Patil were keen on forming a government, Gundu Rao, who knew what it meant to head a government of defectors, wanted the Assembly to be dissolved.' (*India Today*: January 15, 1985, p. 51). In the end, the Congress leadership decided that their best chance to recapture the state government lay in letting the assembly be dissolved and then having the governor appoint Hegde as acting chief minister, so that responsibility for any problems that might arise in the interim could be laid at the Janata Party's doorstep.
6. *India Today*, November 15, 1985, p. 65.

7. *India Today*, May 15, 1989, p. 30.
8. *The Hindustan Times*, March 7, 1990.
9. *India Today*, November 15, 1990, p. 38.
10. Gould, 'General Elections, 1996' (Note 3 above), p. 2336.
11. *India Today*, October 31, 1990, p. 41.
12. See Gould 'General Elections, 1996' (Note 3 above).
13. Gould, 'General Elections, 1996' (Note 3 above).
14. *Deccan Herald* (Bangalore), February 5, 1998.
15. For an analysis of how 'selective co-optation' operates at the grassroots of Indian politics see Gould, *Grass-Roots Politics in India* (Note 4 above), especially chapter 11.
16. *Deccan Herald* (Bangalore), February 5, 1998.

8

Regime Change and Shifting Social Bases: The Telugu Desam Party in the 12th General Election

Karli Srinivasulu[1]

The 12th General Election in Andhra Pradesh (AP) can be considered the first major election in the post-N.T. Rama Rao phase of the state's politics. N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) dominated the political theater of the state for more than a decade (1983–1995), whether in power (1983–1989 and 1994–1995) or out of power (1989–1994); he laid down the rules to which all other political parties and actors had to respond for their survival, either by adhering to or aggressively rejecting them. The NTR phenomenon in AP can be said to have paved the way for a regime change and consolidated and sustained its social support base on an alternative policy regime. The assembly election in 1994, in which the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) returned to power with an overwhelming majority of 214 (and reduced the Congress to its all-time low of 26) in an election to 292 seats, demonstrated the popularity of the policy package offered by the TDP. Any critical understanding of the 1998 General Election must be located in the context of the policy changes brought about by the TDP government headed by N. Chandrababu Naidu after the 1996 election. These policy changes, which marked a

decisive departure from the NTR phase and his legacy, as reflected in the reversal of the policy promises which brought the TDP back to power in the 1994 election, are crucial to the understanding of the electoral outcome in the 1998 parliamentary election. Though the 1996 election was conducted after the demise of NTR, it was in a very limited sense a post-NTR election for the TDP, as NTR's legacy and regime politics still dominated its electoral strategy. It is only in the 1998 election, as a result of rapid changes in the policy domain in the intervening period effecting the configuration of social and political forces, that a shift in the regime became apparent.

The 1998 election in the state, as I shall argue, reflects the regime change and points to the ushering in of the TDP into a 'post-NTR' phase. This analysis identifies the following dimensions of this process of change:

1. There has been not only the physical exit of the persona of NTR but a determined bid by the TDP government to distance itself from the style and symbols associated with NTR.
2. A concerted attempt at the disassociation of the TDP government from the policy regime of NTR by diluting and delegitimizing it and showing a determination to replace it with a pro-liberalization regime.
3. Corresponding to these changes, a reconfiguration of social forces leading to changes in the social coalition forged during the NTR phase effecting the social support base of the party can be deciphered.

The contention here is not that the process of ushering in a post-NTR phase has been successfully accomplished in political terms; but that in the emerging relationship between the three aspects of symbolic politics, policy regime, and social coalition, as I will argue in this chapter, a clear direction of change to the post-NTR phase can be discerned. This is crucial, as we shall see, not only for an understanding of the TDP, and its place in the changing structure of state politics, but also for an analysis of the electoral outcome and the configuration of social forces influencing it. In other words, if the post-NTR phase requires a redrawing of the political boundary and its rules, not only as an objective necessity but as a subjective requirement for the TDP, this change could lead to shifts in the balance of social forces with a significant impact on the structure of politics in the state. Here I attempt through

an analysis of the 1998 election, which offers a critical moment, to gauge and assess any such changes in the offing and their import for state politics.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, in order to understand the emergence and electoral victory of the TDP, a brief analysis of the shifts in state politics is attempted. This involves an appreciation of the changing social forces effecting the social support of the Congress in the larger context of post-Emergency national politics. In the second section, the politics of regime change brought about by the TDP and its policy and institutional aspects are analyzed. In the third section, the impact of the changes that were effected in the regime politics by the Naidu government since 1996 through his pro-liberal reform policies, which form the context of the 1998 elections, are analyzed; this is attempted with a view to examining the TDP's performance vis-à-vis the Congress and the BJP in the 1998 General Election and to assess the shifts in their social bases. In Section Four, the broad patterns emerging from this analysis are summarized with a view to charting the trajectory of political change in the state.

I

The Emergency is a major watershed in the contemporary history of India. The electoral defeat of the Emergency regime not only generated a new political sensibility toward parliamentary democracy and the question of democratic rights in the country, it also gave rise to, and in certain cases renewed, the demand for regional autonomy and redrafting of center–state relations in the context of India's multi-linguistic nationality scenario. The (re)emergence and consolidation of regional party formations in opposition to the Congress is a significant aspect of the post-Emergency political reality. Regardless of this, the Congress high command under Indira Gandhi continued its policy of centralization of power. Indira Gandhi, the grand strategist of the era of centralization in Indian politics, can be credited with perfecting the politics of asymmetry—between politics and economy, leadership and support base, and representation and emergent regional and social dynamics. The installation of chief ministers in Congress-ruled states; regular interference in affairs of the provincial Congress; rampant factionalism and dissidence leading to frequent changes in leadership, further intensifying factional infighting, and ineffectiveness of state Congress

governments leading to the unpredictability of change; and rampant and blatant corruption partly caused by short and unpredictable tenures became part of the standard narrative of the Congress Party.

The significant aspects of this situation can be pointed out as:

1. It seriously hampered the growth of leadership in the party which was sensitive to and could control the grassroots organization, as everyone with political ambition, given the mode of 'installation', looked forward to the blessings of *El Supremo*, breeding sycophancy and giving a go-by to political initiative and leadership.
2. The Congress strategy of 'imposing' leaders on the party and government in total disregard of grassroots processes—the dynamics of caste and class configuration of social forces—only increased the gap between political leadership and social forces, thus generating serious contradictions resulting in a much serious crisis—factionalism being only an aspect of this.

In accordance with the strategy of asymmetry, the Congress, when faced with regional autonomy assertions in the backward regions of linguistic states, instead of addressing their socio-economic basis, sought to address them by altering the political power equation through leadership changes. Thus, leaders belonging to dominant castes from backward regions were given prime positions to the disgruntlement of the dominant castes from advanced regions. When faced with further dissidence, leaders from backward communities were chosen as substitutes. To control the leaders with a mass base, elites without any base were preferred. Instead of resolving the crisis, the Congress only postponed it temporarily, leading to further manifestations of crises in newer ways and on an intensified scale. This political strategy only progressively weakened the Congress organizationally and bred rampant factionalism.

The story of the Congress in AP conforms to this pattern. The beginning of the logic of asymmetry in the state can be traced to the late 1960s. The state of AP was formed in 1956 on the linguistic principle following the recommendation of the Fazal Ali Commission on states' reorganization, and comprises the three regions of Telangana (Telugu-speaking region of the princely Hyderabad State), coastal Andhra, and Rayalaseema (which were part of British-governed Madras Presidency). It is an irony of history that coastal Andhra, benefiting from colonial rule, saw developed irrigation systems, modern agriculture, modern education, and developed civil society. In contrast, the Telangana region,

due to the feudal aristocratic rule of the Nizam, lagged far behind. The merger of the advanced coastal Andhra region with backward Telangana had its own tensions from the time of birth of the state. The process of accumulated tension manifested in the late 1960s in the form of a mass movement for a separate Telangana state.[2] A section of the disgruntled Congress leadership joined the movement. The subsequent dissipation of the movement is a testimony to the intolerant, high-handed, and manipulative handling by the Congress high command. The only concession given to the Telangana region, given the factional development along regional lines in the Congress, as a compensation to the regional autonomy agitation was the installation of Congressmen from Telangana as chief ministers in succession; more often than not they were men without any significant support base.

Thus, P.V. Narasimha Rao, a Brahmin from Telangana, with hardly any mass base, was installed in the place of K. Brahamananda Reddy. In pursuit of his political survival in the political context dominated by the Reddy, Kamma, and Velama castes (three major land-owning castes), Rao sought to forge a social bloc consisting of backward castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities by giving them political berths in the Cabinet, greater representation to this bloc, and reducing the Reddy preponderance in the 1972 assembly election; this prompted a commentator to interpret the 1972 assembly election as leading to the 'eclipse of the Reddy-raj'.[3] Corresponding to this, measures like the AP Land Ceiling Act of 1972 and the launching of anti-poverty programmes, more than their effective implementation, played a catalytic role in furthering the social polarization within the Congress: while on the one hand it led to the closing up of ranks among the landed gentry, it contributed in a significant way to the rise of awareness among the backward communities on the other.

However, 1972 remained an exception. Soon the Congress Party had to restore the earlier political balance among the different social groups under the dominance of the Reddy community. This can be said to have only contributed to the disgruntlement of the backward communities and also a section of the dominant castes, like the Kammas, within the Congress fold.

The emergence of the TDP has to be seen against this background of asymmetry between political power and socio-economic processes—region, caste, and class being three important coordinates. This asymmetry contributed to the crisis and decline of the social support of the Congress, which is reflected in the steep decline of popular vote and

seats—from 52.3 percent with 202 seats in the 1972 election to 39.2 percent with 175 seats in the 1978 election—and the consolidation of the non-Congress vote.[4] The overwhelming victory of the TDP in the 1983 assembly election within a year of its launching, by garnering 46.3 percent of the vote and winning 202 seats (further reducing the Congress vote and seat tally to 33.6 percentage points, i.e., by 5.6 percent and 60 seats respectively), not only demonstrated how deep the crisis in the Congress was but also reflected the reconfiguration of social forces.[5] What is politically significant is the fact that in the pre-TDP phase, the parliamentary Left constituted a stable ideological opposition to the Congress, though it had only around 3 to 5 percent of the popular vote in assembly and parliamentary elections since 1977. The absence of any electoral alliance between the TDP and the Left in 1983, which was on account of the failure to reach an understanding on seat adjustments, gave the TDP the entire credit of being a match to the Congress. It was only in the 1985 election that the electoral alliance between the TDP and the Left was forged.

The TDP consolidating itself against the unstable equilibrium of the social base, the fragile and rudderless organizational rank and file of the Congress, and a fragmented and directionless opposition could easily carve out a niche for itself. The TDP's victory in the 1983 assembly election was exceptional in the sense that it rode to power on a wave that was largely the making of NTR: the image of a matinee idol built on more than three decades of a successful film career in the Telugu cinema industry and the use of rich imagery pregnant with deeper political meanings and symbolism. The TDP's campaign hinged on two planks: (*a*) critique of the Congress political culture; and (*b*) the 'self-respect' of the Telugus.

In the context of the declining legitimacy of the Congress, NTR's orchestrated exposure of Congressmen's 'bartering of Telugu self-respect' in the Delhi durbar attracted an immediate and overwhelming response from the masses. Given the historical memory of a prolonged struggle for Vishalandra (a united state for the Telugus), betrayal of the Telangana movement by the Congressmen, and overall decay in the Congress organization, NTR's appeal for support on the slogan of Telugu 'self-respect' caught the popular imagination.

To appreciate this political change, it is necessary to examine the deeper processes of socio-economic transformation. An important aspect of transformation in the countryside subsequent to the Green Revolution is the emergence and consolidation of a market-related rich

peasant sector which has moved to the center-stage of India's political economy.[6] In the ruling class coalition dominated by the monopoly bourgeoisie, the rich peasantry is an important and fairly aggressive class which has started influencing the course of politics in a number of states. The politico-ideological maturity and acceptability of this class is shaped by the historical context of anti-feudal struggles, the extent and expanse of social crises, and of course the ability of its leadership to create real or imaginary aspirations among the people by making use of the available repertoire of cultural and politico-ideological reserves. This class, given its subordinate position in the hierarchical power structure of the ruling class coalition and its aggressive class instinct, shows an inclination for the agitational mode in the articulation of its interests and the enlargement of its share in state patronage through budgetary and plan allocations. Though its major demand has been for subsidies for agricultural inputs—electricity, fertilizers, high yielding variety seeds, and so on—and remunerative prices for its produce, it has displayed tremendous organizational ability by rallying the lower echelons of rural society through its populist progressive postures on economic, gender, and nationality questions. It is important to point out that this process has successfully sidelined crucial issues such as land reform and wages that directly concern the rural poor. The agitations of this class, assuming aggressive forms like *rasta roko*, rail *roko*, dharnas, and bandhs in Maharastra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Karnataka in the post-Emergency period, caught the fancy of metropolitan intellectuals, prompting them to christen them 'New Farmers' Movements' for the superficial reason of them being non-party formations. The other facet of this class is evident in the manifestation of factional conflicts within the Congress, the vigorous emergence of regional parties, as well as the discursive significance that the question of regional autonomy gained and the renewed debate on center–state relations in the post-Emergency period. The shift in agitational and electoral politics since the 1970s is an evidence of the centrality of this class in the states, especially those which experienced Green Revolution-induced development.

What is being witnessed in Andhra is an aggressively enterprising version of this class: sociologically a bulk of this class belongs to the Kamma and Reddy castes and to a lesser extent to the Kapu caste of the Krishna–Godavari delta. Its enterprising nature is evident in its ability to explore newer possibilities and expand rapidly over the decades.[7] They have entered the cinema industry and dominated its production, distribution, and even exhibition; established educational institutions and

contributed to their commercialization; and they even have the news media under their control. The families belonging to this class constitute a big chunk of the so-called Non Resident Indians whom the Government of India today woos to invest in India.

It was only from the late 1970s and early 1980s, as a result of state-sponsored developmental processes, the Green Revolution strategy, the commercialization of the countryside, and the availability of education in rural society, that the emergence of a rural propertied middle class and an educated employed middle class from the backward castes, like the peasant caste of Munnur Kapu, the weaver caste of Padmashali, the toddy tapper caste of Gouda, and the sheep-rearing caste of Golla and Kurma, is witnessed. With changes in their position they could enter the agricultural rural credit system, cooperatives, and small businesses. Thanks to reservations in education and employment, their educated youth could also enter educational institutions and subaltern positions of the state bureaucracy. This change in the socio-economic scenario of the state can be said to have infused confidence in these communities; as a result, they started staking their claims to office in representative institutions.

This political economy of change, in which the nouveau riche, the rich peasant, the backward caste middle peasant, and the educated middle class started asserting themselves against the feudal landed gentry predominantly belonging to the traditionally Congress-supporting Reddy community, forms the background of the TDP. The TDP could appeal to these politically ambitious segments and the latter readily rallied around the TDP against the Congress.

II

Central to our analysis of the significance of the TDP in AP politics is the regime change brought about by the TDP government: the TDP under NTR paved way for a regime distinct from that of the Congress. By regime change we mean a shift from an established arrangement of power relations, and actual or potential realignment of social forces to resolve or postpone conflicts within the ruling bloc and between it and the masses. Regime change is thus marked by a change in slogans, issues, and modes of political and electoral mobilization. It also initiates a new discourse on development and change by building up a critique

of established practices and priorities, thereby bringing in new perceptions and priorities. Regime change therefore also implies change in institutional arrangements and reorientation in policy interventions.

The TDP's coming to power in 1983 paved the way for a regime change in all these aspects. Ending two-and-a-half decades of Congress rule, the TDP initiated a regime change by forging its own distinct social coalition to carve out its social base. The constituents of this coalition were the nouveau riche of developed coastal Andhra, the rich peasant elite of the dominant castes in the backward regions, and the middle peasant, educated and business middle class of backward castes in subaltern positions. This was in contrast to the Congress, which especially since the 1970s, through its strategy of patronage and expediency with a declining emphasis on the 'politics of accommodation', nurtured the political elite from the dominant castes of the backward regions of Telangana and Rayalaseema.

The crisis in the state Congress—a reflection of the deeper crisis in the dominant class—caste politics, and inadequacies of the politics of accommodation of social forces from the subaltern caste–classes was sought to be turned by the TDP to its advantage by reconfiguring the contours of state politics.

Part of this regime change with wider/deeper repercussions was the abolition of the age-old institution of village officers, i.e., patwaris and patels. This pre-colonial institution, which was integrated by the Congress into its power structure after Independence, was seen as a hindrance by rising backward communities to their social and political development. NTR's attempt to abolish these offices was a decisive step towards the removal of these obstacles; by abolishing them, NTR could strike a blow at the Congress base as well as remove any apprehensions in the minds of the backward class elite about the TDP's intention to accommodate their interests.

Further, as a step towards this direction, the TDP initiated reforms in the Panchayati Raj system. The Panchayati Raj system in AP consisted of three tiers: the gram panchayat, the panchayat samithi, and the zilla parishad at the village, taluk, and district levels respectively, which more or less conformed to revenue administrative divisions. What was significant was the middle-tier of the panchayat samithi, whose elected president as a matter of fact was more powerful than the member of the legislative assembly with powers vested in him on a wide range of subjects. With the coverage of geographical area coterminous with the revenue taluk and given its key place in the rural power structure and control

over huge developmental resources and powers to distribute them, this position has been controlled by the local dominant, entrenched, landed caste elites traditionally supporting the Congress; obviously, they were not easily displaceable.

NTR's decision to restructure the middle tier by creating smaller mandals in the place of larger panchayat samithis was meant to dislodge the Congress from its hold by displacing the local dominant castes from it and to facilitate the political accommodation of the elites of the backward communities, who on their own, using their limited resource base and caste networks, could not reach the larger panchayat samithi level. In addition, political reservations to Panchayati Raj institutions further facilitated the power shift to the subaltern elite.

If the promise of accommodating the subaltern elite in the power structure through institutional changes was one aspect of the TDP regime, then providing specific policy support to different strata of popular classes was another aspect. Thus the Rs 2 for a kilo of rice scheme for the poor (which became a quintessentially TDP scheme), supply of power to farming communities at subsidized rates, property inheritance rights to women, and old age pension schemes shaped the populist–welfarist image of the TDP regime during its first innings in power.[8]

Thus, the main planks of the first tenure of the TDP in power were: village officials' abolition, mandal restructuring, and welfarism. All these three major policy interventions were meant to strike at the social base of the Congress and carve out a support base for the TDP among the backward communities and women.

III

The TDP under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership has undergone a remarkable change. NTR had an instinctive spontaneous style, partly in tune with his self-image of a good Samaritan who believed that he was in politics to 'save' the Telugus from greedy and corrupt Congressmen and to restore their 'self-respect'. In contrast, Naidu, widely acclaimed as a hi-tech enthusiast and pro-reform progressive, has gradually succeeded in shedding the TDP of its image built by NTR, especially as a party that stood for the welfare of the poor, and in its place has brought in a distinctly *managerial* style that emphasises building an effective cadre-based organization and a system of reward and punishment based on performance. In other words, 'seats will be allotted to only those

who contribute to the victory of the TDP' is said to guide Naidu. Naidu is reported to have elaborate polling booth-wise data on his computer with the help of which he actively monitors and coordinates party organization on a day-to-day basis.[9] This elaborate monitoring network makes access to information indispensable and easy to control the cadre by keeping them on their toes. The success of the TDP, in the face of deepening and visible anti-TDP sentiment among the electorate, is partly due to this management style.

The 1996 election in the state has to be appreciated against the background of the coup by the Naidu group against NTR's leadership in August 1995 and the formation of two rival Telugu Desam Parties—the TDP led by Naidu and the NTR TDP(LP) led by NTR's widow, Laxmi Parvathi, after the demise of NTR in January 1996. The 1996 election was fought by both the rival parties claiming the legacy of NTR. Though the coup against NTR was engineered by Naidu, who succeeded in forming a government by rallying the support of a maximum number of MLAs, he did campaign in the 1996 election, uninhibited by the 'act of betrayal' (as described by NTR and Laxmi Parvathi), on the legacy of NTR. The TDP won 16 seats with a popular vote of 32.6 percentage points, as the election symbol of 'bicycle' allotted to it turned into an advantage, while the NTR TDP(LP) lost all the seats it contested, although it could garner 10.7 percent of the popular vote. It is a cruel irony of history that Naidu should turn out a claimant of NTR's legacy whereas the NTR TDP(LP) is reduced to an insignificant position in state politics with the desertion by 27 of its 30 MLAs following its dismal performance in the 1996 election (Table 8.1).[10]

The 1998 election, in contrast, was fought by the TDP with the confidence springing from its firm grip on power. But what is worth noting are the changes effected in the regime politics, reflecting a strategic shift within the TDP's core class base from agrarian to the business–industrial strata, and the Telugu media, controlled by the members of this class, actively supporting it, which substantially demonstrates the determination of Naidu and his supporters to move away from the NTR legacy. It may be recollected that the TDP under NTR came back to power in the 1994 assembly election by reducing the Congress to an all time low of 26 in a house of 294. The promises of restoring the Rs 2 for a kilo of rice scheme, prohibition (for which the women in the state had been agitating for a couple of years), and power subsidy to agriculture, which were diluted by the Congress government by dubbing them as populist in the context of liberal economic reforms initiated by the

Table 8.1: Lok Sabha Elections, 1996 and 1998: Region-wise Break-up

Party		*Coastal Andhra*		*Rayalaseema*		*Telangana*		*Total*	
		W/C	*Vote %*	*W/C*	*Vote %*	*W/C*	*Vote %*	*W/C*	*Vote %*
		*(19)**		*(8)**		*(15)**		*(42)**	
INC	1996	8/19	40.55	6/8	44.29	8/15	36.35	22/42	39.66
	1998	12/19	41.3	6/8	44.5	4/15	32.54	22/42	38.46
TDP(N)	1996	10/17	36.5	2/7	39.13	4/12	24.85	16/36	32.59
	1998	4/17	37.2	2/7	37.66	6/11	23.5	12/35	31.97
CPI	1996	1/1	1.84	0/1	3.65	1/1	2.41	2/3	2.39
	1998	1/1	1.89	0/1	4.21	1/1	2.55	2/3	2.56
CPI(M)	1996	0/1	1.5	–	–	1/2	5.97	1/3	2.91
	1998	0/1	1.8	–	–	0/2	5.43	0/3	2.89
BJP	1996	0/18	2.14	0/7	1.38	0/14	11.8	0/39	5.65
	1998	2/16	13.7	0/8	12.16	2/14	26.25	4/38	18.29
TDP(NTR)	1996	0/19	13.8	0/8	8.7	0/15	7.97	0/42	10.66
	1998	0/2	2.32	0/1	0.02	0/2	0.49	0/5	1.2
Janata Dal	1996	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	1998	–	–	–	–	1/1	2.25	1/1	0.87
AIMIM	1996	–	–	–	–	1/2	2.96	1/2	1.12
	1998	–	–	–	–	1/1	3.93	1/1	1.52
Independents	1996	0/19	2.3	0/8	2.76	0/15	5.86	0/42	3.77
	1998	0/19	1.39	0/8	1.19	0/15	2.16	0/42	1.66

* Number of constituencies in each region.

Sources: 1. Government of Andhra Pradesh, *Report of the Eleventh General and Bye-Elections in Andhra Pradesh, 1996, House of the People (Statistical)* (Hyderabad: General Administration [Elections] Department).

2. Government of Andhra Pradesh, *Report on the 12th General Elections to House of the People, 1998 in Andhra Pradesh (Statistical)* (Hyderabad: General Admn. [Elections] Department).

Note: W/C = Won/Contested.

Congress government at the center in mid-1991, were major issues in the electoral campaign strategy of the TDP that brought it to power in 1994. The TDP regime under NTR with its support for subsidies, emphasis on welfarism, and populist rhetoric of an anti-liberal variety carved out an image of being averse to economic reforms. For this reason, it attracted criticism from Congressmen, pro-reform media, and pro-reform enthusiasts among the middle and upper classes.

The policy regime that rendered the TDP a pro-poor image has been gradually diluted and weakened after the 1996 election. It may be noted that the price increase of subsidized rice from Rs 2 to Rs 3.50 and

reduction of the quota from 25 kg to 16 kg per family, the lifting of prohibition on Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), and the increase in power slab rates and water cess for the agricultural sector are consequences of the initiation of World Bank-sponsored economic reforms in the state.[11] In conformity with the reform process and also as a mechanism to moderate the people's response, the TDP government launched the *Janmabhoomi* program with a promise of involving 'people' in developmental activities and making the administration transparent and accountable to the people. The *Janmabhoomi* program, consisting of the three components of (*a*) *prajala vaddaku palana* ('administration at the doorstep of the people'), (*b*) *shramadhanam* ('donation of labor'), and (*c*) micro-planning, is said to have been launched to involve people in the identification of local community needs, and formulation and implementation of plans, with the people contributing their labor and the government rendering required material support. The response to this government-sponsored 'grassroots movement', which was enthusiastic in the early phases, declined gradually as it failed to meet popular expectations.[12]

The TDP government has faced stiff resistance to the hike in water cess and power slab rates from the farming community during the last couple of years. The government's resolve to push reforms ahead, even in the face of resistance from the farming community, is amply evident in the way in which the spontaneous peasant upsurge in the advanced coastal belt in 1997 (three farmers were killed in police firing in Kaldari village in West Godavari) was dealt with. It is curious to witness a repeat of development vs. welfare–populism, which was the chief slogan in the Congress arsenal in its attack on the TDP; but this time it is the TDP itself which is mouthing it. The liberal avatar of the TDP is thus a critical factor in the analysis of the 1998 General Election. Most hard pressed to defend them were the Left parties, which being the electoral allies of the ruling TDP, found it embarrassing to raise the economic issues, and thus they largely confined themselves to national issues in their electoral campaigning.

The move away from the populist policy regime by the TDP could in all probability have generated a substantial popular disenchantment with the regime, as can be assessed from a pre-poll survey[13] according to which while the TDP and its allies counted on 49.5 percent of beneficiaries of subsidized rice among its supporters, the Congress had the support of only 38.3 percent of the beneficiaries. More interesting is the response of the sample respondents to the prohibition policy—while

57.8 percent of the Congress supporters disapproved of the policy, only 28.5 percent of TDP supporters and its allies disapproved of it. This did not result in any commensurate organized form. With the parliamentary Left being an electoral ally of the TDP, and Congress activity confined only to electoral campaigning and power politics, there was no organized channel to ventilate the protest.

The broad consensus on reforms did not deter the Congress and BJP from making the move of the TDP away from its promised policy agenda a central election issue. The issue that came in handy, and was made into a major campaign issue to criticise the TDP, was the suicides of more than 300 cotton farmers in the Telangana region.[14] Besides, the Congress and BJP reminded the electorate of the TDP's earlier promises and criticised the reversal. In the absence of anything positive or suggestive of alternatives, the campaign of the opposition largely remained negative.

Even in the case of the BJP, in whose campaign film actresses like Vijaya Shanti, Gouthami, and actor and dissident TDP Rajya Sabha member Mohan Babu actively participated, the campaign essentially harped on the cotton farmers' suicides, besides of course reminding the electorate that it was an election for the national parliament and only the BJP could provide a stable government under the able leadership of Vajpayee.

Though the liberal economic reforms have distanced the TDP from the populist–welfarist legacy of NTR and in all likelihood could have contributed to the discontent of the popular classes, with the exception of the urban middle class which is euphoric about computers, fly-overs and foreign investments, the party continues to bank on the electoral strategy of the earlier period by relying on the ideology of anti-Congressism and backward caste mobilization.

In contrast to the Congress which showed preference for candidates from the dominant peasant castes (for instance, in 1996, the Congress had more than half-a-dozen MPs from the Reddy community; the TDP had only two MPs from it), the TDP relied on the strategy of fielding candidates from the OBC communities, which could be said to reflect the arithmetic of caste and the political economy of caste–class configuration. Thus, in the weaver preponderant (though traditionally Velama dominant) Karimnagar constituency, where every party preferred to field either a Velama or a Reddy candidate, the TDP gave the ticket to a Padmashali weaver caste candidate. In Tenali, a coastal constituency with a preponderance of handloom weavers and the Kapu

farming community, a film actress from the weaver community was fielded against dominant Kamma candidates. More surprising is the case of Warangal, where the TDP fielded a tribal candidate against a powerful sitting MP from the dominant Reddy community and won the seat both in 1996 and 1998. This strategy worked in favor of the TDP in an otherwise intensely fought 1996 election. The attempt to repeat this strategy in the 1998 election has not met with corresponding success as the losses of the TDP in Karimnagar, Tenali, and Bapatla amply demonstrate. The reasons are not very difficult to find.

First, while the rapid reform process, as suggested earlier, resulting in the decline of welfare public policy support to the poor could have in varying degrees led to electoral indifference toward the TDP, the discontent, specifically among the farming, artisanal and agricultural labor communities, springing from the distress and marginalization experienced in the context of the liberal economic reforms has not been addressed by the ruling party. This so-called anti-establishment feeling has been used by the Congress and the BJP.

Second, the success of backward caste candidates in 1996 was perceived by the dominant landed castes as a threat to their political dominance and they sought to respond to the TDP's strategy by closing ranks, cutting across party affiliations, to rally behind the candidate with winning chances. The defeat of the TDP incumbent in Karimnagar by the BJP candidate from the Velama community is said to be because of the tacit understanding reached among the elite of the Velama and Reddy communities.

Third, the success of the TDP strategy seems to have forced the Congress to make modifications in its choice of candidates, albeit only marginally. Thus, a Kapu, instead of a Kamma, was fielded against the TDP weaver woman candidate in Tenali.

Fourth, a widely shared sense of indifference and neglect of the constituencies by the incumbents is reported to have been felt by the electorate. This is vindicated in the fact that as many as 12 incumbents of the TDP and its allies and 10 incumbents of the Congress lost the elections this time (Table 8.2).

Another crucial change witnessed during the last couple of years in the politics of caste mobilization that had a significant bearing on the electoral arithmetic is the split in the Dalit movement on subcaste lines. Since the mid-1980s, Andhra Pradesh has witnessed an unprecedented mobilization of Dalits (Malas and Madigas are two major castes in the state) under the leadership of the Dalit Maha Sabha (DMS). The DMS, which started as an organizational expression of Dalit protest against

Table 8.2: General Election, 1998: Seat Changes and Vote Margins

No. Constituency	*Vote Margin Percentage*
I. Congress (I) Retains:	
4 Vishakapatnam	6.91
13 Vijayawada	3.34
15 Guntur	7.62
18 Ongole	2.84
19 Nellore (SC)	6.28
20 Tirupathi (SC)	1.25
22 Rajampet	7.90
23 Cuddapah	7.29
25 Anantapur	12.25
26 Kurnool	1.71
33 Medak	2.09
42 Miryalaguda	1.69
II. Congress (I) Loses to TDP and Allies:	
2 Parvathipuram (ST)	3.92
9 Amalapuram (SC)	13.70
27 Nandyal	0.67
29 Mahabubnagar	3.03
32 Siddipet (SC)	1.12
34 Nizamabad	4.47
36 Peddapalli (SC)	0.76
38 Hanamkonda	7.45
III. Congress (I) Loses to BJP:	
8 Rajamundry	1.27
31 Secunderabad	20.78
IV. TDP and Allies Retain:	
1 Srikakulam	13.00
3 Bobbili	3.95
5 Bhadrachalam (ST)	8.83
21 Chittoor	10.33
35 Adilabad	4.55
39 Warangal	3.18
41 Nalgonda	2.73
V. TDP and Allies Lose to Congress (I):	
6 Anakapalli	3.54
10 Narsapur	6.59
11 Eluru	2.95
12 Machilipatnam	11.71
14 Tenali	2.32
16 Bapatla	6.05
17 Narasaraopet	6.39
24 Hindupur	3.97
28 Nagarkurnool (SC)	2.56
40 Khammam	1.29

Table 8.2 continued

Table 8.2 continued

No. Constituency	*Vote Margin Percentage*
VI. TDP Loses to BJP:	
7 Kakinada	8.43
37 Karimnagar	12.50

Source: Report on the 12th General Elections to House of the People, 1998 in Andhra Pradesh (Statistical), General Administration (Elections) Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

the massacre of Dalits in Karamchedu, a prosperous village in Prakasham district, where six Madigas were killed in a gruesome manner and many more injured in an attack by dominant Kammas and who mobilized in hundreds on July 17, 1985, soon spread to the entire state with major concentration in the coastal region by rallying not only the Dalits but also the educated youth of backward communities.[15] A crucial shift in the Dalit movement and politics in the state can be noted following the 1994 assembly election. In this election, the DMS rank and file rallied around the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), by both contesting and actively campaigning for it.[16] The dismal performance of the BSP and garnering of only 0.5 percent of the popular vote, disproportionate to pre-election expectations, resulted in mutual slandering and internal squabbles and paved the way for the dissipation of the organization and movement. Out of this disarray emerged and grew a separate movement of the Madigas demanding classification as Scheduled Castes for reservations in education and employment. It may be noted that there are around 60 castes in the Scheduled Caste category in the state; the Madigas and Malas are numerically large while others are very small castes. In terms of regional break-up, while the Malas are preponderant in the advanced coastal region, the Madigas are a larger community in backward Telangana. The logic of uneven regional development has its relevance even in the sociology of Dalit communities. Thus, while the Malas, especially of the coastal districts, have a visible presence in education, employment, and politics, including leadership positions of Dalit organizations like the DMS, the Madigas have lagged far behind. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS), articulating this ground situation, has grown into a major force and is even capable of influencing the electoral fortunes of parties. The TDP, whose support base among the Scheduled Castes has not been very significant as the Scheduled Castes have traditionally supported the Congress, seized this opportunity by supporting the subcategorization demand.

The MRPS reciprocated the TDP government's support of its demand by openly giving a call to Madigas to vote for TDP candidates. In Peddapally SC reserved constituency, the TDP fielded a Madiga woman candidate against the powerful Congress candidate and a former union Cabinet minister, G. Venkat Swamy. The Mala Mahanadu, which emerged as a counter-point to the MRPS, responded to the latter's call by appealing to the Malas to support the Congress. The sharpening of political differences between the Malas and Madigas is summed up by a Dalit activist of Guntur, who campaigned for the BSP, as follows:

> In this election the single most important issue that preoccupied the minds of the Dalits was the subcategorization of the SCs—the Madigas demanding it and the Malas vehemently opposing it. No other issue is seen as important as this even in Guntur district which has been the center of the Dalit movement. The Malas here, as we found in our village tours during the election campaign, were so determined to vote for the Congress(I) that they were reluctant even to listen to us. In their view, a vote for the Congress(I) was clearly a vote against the TDP.[17]

The deep divisions among the Dalits along the Mala–Madiga lines though has put Dalit politics on a new trajectory and seems to have carved out a new support base for the TDP. While in the 1996 election the Congress won as many as five out of six SC reserved constituencies with huge margins (above 50,000 votes), in 1998 the Congress could manage to win only three seats (one in the coastal region, two in Rayalaseema, and none in Telangana), that too with slender margins. The TDP's unexpected yet convincing gains from the Congress are reflective of the changing course of Dalit articulation.

One of the significant changes witnessed in the 1998 election is the marked improvement in the performance of the BJP, both in terms of popular vote and seats won. If we look at the electoral fortunes of the party, considering the 1994 assembly election as a point of departure when the party entered the electoral fray in a major way contesting all seats, we notice nothing spectacular about the BJP's performance in 1994. While the percentage of popular vote polled by the BJP at the state level was 3.9 percent, in coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema it polled a mere 1.8 and 1.2 percentage points respectively. All the three seats it won in 1994 were from the Telangana region, where it polled 7.6 percent.[18]

In the 1996 General Election, when the BJP emerged as a major political party in the national parliament, in AP it could not win even a single

Table 8.3: Lok Sabha Elections, 1996 and 1998: Constituency Results

No.	*Name of the PC*	*1996*		*1998*		*Change*
		Winner	*Second*	*Winner*	*Second*	
Coastal Andhra						
1	Srikakulam	TDP	NTR TDP(LP)	TDP	NTR TDP(LP)	–
2	Parvathipuram (ST)	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
3	Bobbili	TDP	INC	TDP	INC	–
4	Vishakhapatnam	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
5	Bhadrachalam (ST)	CPI	INC	CPI	INC	–
6	Anakapalli	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
7	Kakinada	TDP	INC	BJP	TDP	*
8	Rajamundry	INC	TDP	BJP	TDP	*
9	Amalapuram (SC)	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
10	Narasapur	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
11	Eluru	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
12	Machilipatnam	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
13	Vijayawada	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
14	Tenali	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
15	Guntur	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
16	Bapatla	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
17	Narasaraopet	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
18	Ongole	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
19	Nellore (SC)	INC	CPM	INC	CPM	–
Rayalaseema						
20	Tirupathi (SC)	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
21	Chittoor	TDP	INC	TDP	INC	–
22	Rajampet	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
23	Cuddapah	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
24	Hindupur	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
25	Anantapur	INC	CPI	INC	CPI	–
26	Kurnool	INC	TDP	INC	TDP	–
27	Nandyal	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
Telangana						
28	Nagarkurnool (SC)	TDP	INC	INC	TDP	*
29	Mahabubnagar	INC	TDP	JD	INC	*
30	Hyderabad	AIMIM	BJP	AIMIM	BJP	–
31	Secunderabad	INC	BJP	BJP	INC	*
32	Siddipet (SC)	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
33	Medak	INC	TDP	INC	BJP	–
34	Nizamabad	INC	TDP	TDP	BJP	*
35	Adilabad	TDP	INC	TDP	INC	–
36	Peddapalli (SC)	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
37	Karimnagar	TDP	INC	BJP	TDP	*

Table 8.3 continued

Table 8.3 continued

38	Hanamkonda	INC	TDP	TDP	INC	*
39	Warangal	TDP	INC	TDP	INC	–
40	Khammam	CPM	INC	INC	CPM	*
41	Nalgonda	CPI	INC	CPI	INC	–
42	Miryalaguda	INC	CPM	INC	CPM	–

* Indicates the change between the 1996 and 1998 elections.
Sources: Same as Table 8.1.

seat, though it polled 5.65 percentage points. In the 1998 election all this seems to have changed, with the BJP significantly improving its position by getting 18.29 percent of the popular vote and winning four out of the 38 seats it contested—two each from the Telangana and coastal Andhra regions. Unlike in earlier elections, this time the BJP, to a considerable extent, showed regional evenness in the increase of its electoral support as its vote percentages of 13.7, 12.16, and 26.25 in the three regions of coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema, and Telangana respectively demonstrate. Nevertheless, the BJP's strength was relatively more in Telangana.

In view of the BJP's apparent electoral ascendancy, the AP scenario has been compared favorably with Karnataka. Karnataka is the only south Indian state where the BJP acquired a major presence in the last three general elections by making impressive gains in terms of both popular vote and seats. Does the BJP's electoral performance in the recent parliamentary elections signify that AP is going the Karnataka way? What accounts for such a sudden increase in the BJP's popular vote? What kind of realignment of social forces facilitated this rise? Does this point to any long-term consolidation of the BJP? In other words, can the BJP consolidate this and further expand its base? Or is it just a passing, ephemeral phenomenon?

The BJP seems to have gained mainly from its alliance with the NTR TDP(LP), with the latter's vote bank shifting to it. The NTR TDP(LP), which contested all 42 seats in 1996, polled 13.8, 8.7, and 7.97 percentage points in the three regions respectively; in 1998 it contested only five seats (two each in Andhra and Telangana and one in Rayalaseema) and got just 1.2 percent of the votes. Thus, the BJP's alliance with the NTR TDP(LP) seems to have contributed to the swelling of BJP's support in the state from 5.65 to 18.29 percent. Besides, the BJP's gains from the TDP and Congress, though not much at the state level, are quite considerable in some constituencies.[19]

For a deeper analysis one has to go beyond the numbers and look at the reasons for the performance of the BJP. One important

consideration that seems to have prompted the electorate, especially the educated sections, to show a preference for the BJP is its stability plank. It may be recollected that the Congress in the post-Emergency period fought the elections, especially the 1980 and 1991 elections, on the slogan of providing a 'stable' government by projecting a single prime ministerial candidate. This time with the Congress not able to project its prime ministerial candidate and the TDP, being a regional party, having no national level claims, the BJP very vigorously tried to carry its message of 'stable/efficient government' and 'able leader' in the persona of Vajpayee in its aggressive and extensive campaigning through public meetings, door-to-door canvassing by the party cadre including women campaigners, and through the print and electronic media, including local TV cable networks.

But what is to be noted in the BJP campaign is the absence of any explicit reference to Hindutva. Except in places like Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and some places in the northern Telangana districts of Adilabad and Nizamabad along the borders of Maharashtra, which have historically displayed communal volatility and where the BJP's presence has been fairly long, the BJP sought to project a sober image by softening its communal stand. Part of the explanation for the BJP playing down its communal Hindutva identity lies in the fact that in its attempt to expand its support base the party had to woo diverse communities, and that could be better achieved in a political context polarized between the TDP and the Congress by projecting a moderate image.

It is interesting to note that the BJP, facilitated by its alliance with the NTR TDP(LP), tried to project its proximity to NTR. BJP star campaigners, the party general secretary, Venkaiah Naidu, and cine actor and rebel TDP Rajya Sabha MP Mohan Babu, concentrated more on the TDP's distance from the legacy of NTR and claimed that the BJP alone could work for the 'realization of NTR's ideals'.

The BJP thus concentrated on the failure and incapability of Naidu's TDP to attend to the people's issues: thus, issues like the hike in electricity slab charges for the agrarian sector, of agricultural input prices, and dilution of subsidized rice schemes for the poor became prominent components of the BJP's campaign.

Though the general atmosphere in the country, elections within two years, inability of the United Front (UF) to provide a stable government, and the Congress's arbitrary withdrawal of support to the UF, etc., contributed to a positive reception of the BJP's slogan of stable government, what significantly shaped the BJP's success was local dynamics. The alliance with the NTR TDP(LP), as pointed out earlier, was a

major factor in the impressive performance of the BJP. But what facilitated this process by preventing the shift of this support to either the TDP or the Congress is the perceptible disequilibrium in the social bases of both the TDP and the Congress, as reflected in the electoral shifts discussed earlier. This is only further deepened by the joining of a number of leaders from both the Congress and the TDP as well as the NTR TDP(LP) to the BJP. In addition, BJP's strategy, especially in coastal Andhra, which during the last decade or so has witnessed heightened caste identity awareness and polarization, of fielding candidates from caste communities other than that of the candidates of the TDP and Congress seems to have contributed considerably to the increase in the BJP's vote percentages.[20] This, of course, has only sharpened the process of caste polarization and has upset the electoral arithmetic of caste coalitions and support bases of the TDP and the Congress. This is the reason why both these parties in a number of constituencies concentrated their attention on the BJP rather than on each other.

To illustrate this, the cases of Kakinada and Rajamundry, where the BJP defeated the TDP and Congress respectively, can be cited. In Kakinada the BJP fielded a popular cine actor, U.V. Krishnam Raju, from the dominant Raju community against the TDP incumbent and won by a margin of 8.43 percent. What in fact tilted the balance of forces in favor of the BJP in this constituency in particular, and in the Godavari districts in general, is the joining of the BJP by a dissident Congress leader, Mudragada Padbhanabham, who has emerged as an influential leader of the Kapu community in this part by leading a movement demanding the inclusion of the Kapus in the OBC category for reservations since the late 1980s. (While Munnur Kapus of Telangana are in the OBC category, the Kapus of Andhra are in the Forward Category.) In Rajamundry, the BJP fielded a Kapu candidate and won by a mere 1.27 percent margin. But what is to be noted here is that in this constituency there was a significant shift of the Congress support base to the BJP. This is evident in the fact that the Congress, which won the last election by a margin of 12.58 percent over the TDP, has been pushed to a third position in 1998; here the replacement by the Congress of the incumbent candidate was also an important factor.

What could be inferred from this analysis is that there is a crisis in the support bases of the TDP and Congress, which could further deepen if not addressed in time. The BJP has in at least six constituencies, winning in four and emerging second in two, pushed the TDP and Congress into a serious crisis. In many other constituencies, the BJP,

through its strategy of using social polarization on caste lines in the ground situation, could disturb the support bases of the TDP and Congress. But the major challenge before the BJP lies in converting its negative intervention into an advantage. It is possible only when, transcending its limited and polarized support base at present, it succeeds in positively formulating a consensual strategy to evolve a broad coalition of social forces on principles distinctly different from that of the TDP and Congress. Till then it can only play a negative role by tilting the balance between the TDP and Congress. The task facing the BJP is undoubtedly much more difficult than that of the TDP and Congress.

IV

The 1998 General Election in AP shows a considerable subterraneous stirring in the social support structures of the TDP and Congress. Though on the surface their support bases do not appear to be disturbed, as they could maintain their tally in terms of total popular vote percentages, constituency-wise and subregion-wise analyses of their performance, on the contrary, show the development of fault lines in their support structures.

The shift in the regime politics brought about by the ruling TDP, it could be argued, has resulted in a perceptible disenchantment in its subaltern support base, which has carefully been nurtured by it over the years. A section of the TDP's support coalition, especially the poor, farmers, and youth, has shown a strong inclination for the BJP. BJP gains over the TDP in different pockets of the state vindicate this. The 1998 election also points to the limitations of the electoral strategy of the TDP of giving representation to the elite of backward castes, without rendering any concrete policy support to artisans, small/middle peasants, and the agrarian poor of these castes. As regards Dalit community support, the TDP could make new forays into the Madiga community largely because of its support of the Madigas' demand of subcategorization in reservations.

The TDP's attempt to engage with the 'people' by mobilizing them and involving them in the developmental process through its *Janmabhoomi* program has not evoked the intended popular enthusiasm. With the marginalization and decline of the NTR TDP(LP), its support base, which is traditionally the TDP base, should have shifted to the ruling TDP, instead of gravitating to the BJP. Thus, it can be suggested that the

1998 election has not only shown a shared uneasiness in the TDP's social coalition towards the regime shift but also a substantial erosion of it.

The Congress's performance, which appears stable on the surface, has not been very different. This is evident in its losses. Beneath its apparently stable presence, factional divisions, fragility of its organizational network, and increased restlessness in its social coalition (two major communities in its constituency, Kapus and Madigas, have moved perceptibly away from it and have supported the BJP and the TDP respectively) continue to exist and even seem to assume serious proportions. One factor which could have stalled any further decline in the Congress support base is the popular disenchantment with the TDP. The 1998 election clearly shows the failure of the Congress to articulate the crisis resulting from the policy shift by displaying necessary organizational ability and strategic imagination.

The view that the AP political scenario is polarized between the TDP and the Congress giving scope to their competitive dominance cannot be taken in its matter-of-factness. The rise of the BJP in AP shows not only an increase in the fault lines of the TDP and Congress support bases but also its success in further accelerating it in certain constituencies. But the BJP's intervention in this election, in spite of its gains, can be said to be largely negative, as it could only intensify the caste community polarization and thereby effect the fortunes of the TDP and the Congress. The BJP's future growth therefore lies not in its ability to further community polarization but in positively forging an electorally viable alliance of social forces, which requires a distinct program, strategy, and political identity relevant to the emerging specific context of the state.

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9

Orissa: The Fall of the Congress Fortress

Ramashray Roy

I

While analyzing the 1996 parliamentary election in Orissa, I had observed the following:

> The 1996 Lok Sabha elections in Orissa present a paradox. While the electoral support base of the Indian National Congress (INC) is shrinking, cracking and eroding everywhere else in India, it has been reinforced and consolidated in Orissa.... (V)oters of Orissa have usually moved with the political mood of India as a whole insofar as elections to [the] Lok Sabha are concerned. However, the year 1996 by no means fits this pattern. Going against the national pattern, Orissa has come out strongly for the INC. Note, for example, that the INC won 13 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in 1991, garnering about 44 per cent of the votes. This time it won 16 seats. In 1995, Congress came to power in Orissa after a lapse of a decade by trouncing the Janata Dal, the then ruling party. In a sense, then, the 1996 Lok Sabha elections confirm and reinforce [the] trend of Congress ascendance in Orissa that began in 1995.[1]

This paradox was completely undermined in the 1998 parliamentary election in Orissa. Note, for example, that the Congress Party, which

had won 16 parliamentary seats only two years ago, retained only four of these seats and gained one seat from the Janata Dal (JD). Insofar as the Janata Dal itself is concerned, it lost all the four seats it had won in 1996, without gaining any seat. The loss of the Congress Party and the JD meant a gain for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won six Lok Sabha seats in 1998 as against none in 1996, and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), a new political formation coming into being as a consequence of the split in the JD. The BJD won 10 of the 21 parliamentary seats in Orissa. We should also note in this connection the fact that the BJP and BJD had entered into an electoral alliance to fight the 1998 parliamentary election in Orissa.

These are, no doubt, very far-reaching changes that have lent an entirely different hue to the political horizon of Orissa. It is not as yet certain whether this hue will acquire a deeper color or gradually fade away giving rise to yet another hue. Two things are, however, quite clear. First, the dominance that the Congress enjoyed since 1991 is now broken. The possibility of it regaining lost ground is not certain in view of the fact that the Congress is gradually losing ground nationally and there is no sign whatsoever that its political fortunes may take a favorable turn in the near future.

Second, the JD seems to have undergone a permanent paralysis in Orissa after the demise of its much celebrated leader Biju Patnaik and the subsequent split brought about by his son, Naveen Patnaik. The JD could not win a single parliament seat in Orissa in 1998 and its powerful leaders, including an important Cabinet minister in the United Front (UF) government, Srikant Jena, lost the 1998 election very badly, garnering only 14 percent of the total votes polled. What is also interesting to note in this regard is the fact that the troubles of the JD are not yet over. The threat of further splits still hovers over the party; if these threats materialize, it will only mean the extinction of the JD in Orissa.

What is remarkable about the 1998 electoral outcome in Orissa is that it has brought about a radial change in the relative power positions of the Congress, the BJD, and the BJP. The Congress, which previously occupied first position, has now been pushed to third position, vacating its foremost position to the BJD, a newly emergent political force claiming to bear the respectable mantle of Biju Patnaik. The BJP occupies the second position previously occupied by the JD, which now has been pushed to a position of insignificance. What is also interesting to note in this connection is the pattern of gains and losses among the three major parties occupying the center-stage of Orissa politics, that is, the BJD, the

BJP, and the Congress. Note, for example, that out of the 16 seats the Congress had won in 1996, it could retain only four; it lost seven seats to the BJD and five to the BJP; one seat it won from the JD, which conceded the rest of its three seats to the BJD. It is also noteworthy that all the seats that the BJP won in 1998 fall in the northwestern region of Orissa where it had polled more than its state average (16 percent) of votes polled in 1996.

The emergence of the BJD and the BJP as strong political forces in Orissa has been made possible by the alliance they were able to forge with a view to dislodging the Congress from power. The alliance was indeed very successful. However, as we shall see later, it remained an uneasy alliance, generating a lot of heartburn and discontent, even open rebellion, in both parties. As such, the relationship between the BJD and BJP assumes great importance insofar as Orissa politics is concerned. What shape the future course of politics in Orissa will take depends on whether these two partners push for predominance at the cost of one another or not. As matters stand, each of the alliance partners occupies different regions in Orissa. This in itself constitutes a problem inasmuch as, hemmed in and deprived of the status of an all-Orissa party, each of them will seek to strike deeper roots in the territory controlled by the other. This feeling is going to assume greater importance inasmuch as both must push for ascendance—the BJD in the state and the BJP at the national level.

How the state politics going to be affected by this is still unknown. What concerns us here is the factors that have produced the 1998 electoral outcome that has given a new twist to Orissa politics. What follows is an account of the electoral process that was launched as a consequence of the downfall of the UF government led by Gujral. We focus particularly on the realignment of political forces in Orissa consequent upon the fall of the Gujral government and its repercussions for electoral outcome.

II

With the dissolution of the 11th Lok Sabha on December 4, 1997, the way was paved for holding a fresh parliamentary election. The Election Commission (EC) announced a four-phase schedule spanning a period of three weeks with actual poll taking place on February 16, 22, 28, and March 7, 1998. The election in Orissa was scheduled to take place in

two phases—on February 22, 1998 (10 Lok Sabha seats) and 28 February, 1998 (11 Lok Sabha seats). With the announcement of poll dates, the model code of conduct for political parties and candidates come into being. Earlier, on 30 December, 1997, the EC had given its approval to a Cabinet proposal to increase election expenses for Lok Sabha elections from Rs 4.50 lakh to Rs 15 lakh. In order to discourage frivolous candidature, the EC raised the amount of security deposit to Rs 10,000 and increased the numbers of proposers and secondors.[2] With the announcement of the poll schedule, the state Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and political parties braced for the task of successfully completing the process of election, the former to ensure fair and free exercise of electoral choice by voters and the latter to successfully compete in the ensuing electoral battle. To ensure fair and free polls, the EC asked state governments and district officials not to issue new licenses for possession of weapons. In addition, sensitive polling booths were identified where more security forces were to be posted. According to the Orissa State CEC office, 7,995 out of a total of 29,991 polling booths were identified as sensitive.[3]

To ensure peace and order, elaborate security arrangements were made. Instead of keeping a strike force, as was done in the 1996 election, it was decided to increase the number of mobile patrolling units from 90 to 120. An idea of the security arrangements can be made from Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency. Bhadrak had close to 1.2 million voters distributed over 1,102 polling booths, of which 402 polling booths were declared sensitive. For this constituency, 75 police patrolling teams were deployed. Further, 216 police officers, 79 havaldars, 1,544 constables, 676 Home Guards, 813 gramarakshakas, and 13 platoons of the Orissa State Armed Police were deployed. In addition to all these, three observers were deputed by the EC to observe and report on the electoral processes.[4]

To take another example, for the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in 10 constituencies divided into 13,916 polling booths in Orissa on February 22, 1998, the EC pointed out that besides the deployment of police, mobile units were set up for every 15 to 16 polling booths, and 1250 police officers, 950 havaldars, 7,700 constables, and 6,400 Home Guards were deputed. Also, district administrations were asked to take immediate action to check any untoward incidents. Prompt action was to be taken against those who were found intimidating voters, obstructing people from casting their votes, using illegal means to influence voters, using muscle power, capturing booths, and trying to snatch ballot

papers and boxes. Besides, district authorities were also asked to seize money, liquor, and other things if found to be distributed by candidates and political parties.[5]

Despite so many precautions taken to ensure a free and fair poll, scattered incidents did take place to break the smooth flow of the election process. At many places, voters decided to abstain from voting either because the polling booths were located at a great distance or the government had failed to make available certain basic amenities which were available elsewhere. Note, for example, that the villagers of Rugudipali in Phulbani parliamentary constituency threatened to boycott the election on grounds that (*a*) even though the village was situated only 15 km away from the district headquarters, it did not have basic facilities like education, health, road, and electricity; and (*b*) the scheme to provide every village with 200 meters of concrete road had not been implemented in the village.[6] Also, at many places, voters were discouraged by the inconvenient location of polling booths and, therefore, failed to exercise their franchise. For example, in many districts, the voters had, at many places, to cover a long distance to reach polling booths. In one village panchayat, only three booths were set up for 13 villages. Many of the residents in a few other villages had to abstain from voting because the booth was 10 km away.[7]

The second set of factors relates to attempts to influence the voting outcome by misuse of official machinery or by intimidation. A variation of this is the actual use of violence to stop voters from voting or snatching ballot boxes, etc. In respect of the former, the Congress nominee from Phulbani Lok Sabha constituency complained in a letter to the EC that nearly 60,000 voters of the constituency were under threat from 'politically backed' anti-social elements. As a result, these voters were not likely to exercise their franchise fairly and freely. He specifically referred to the disturbance caused by these elements in a meeting organized during the visit of the chief minister. He therefore urged the EC to take adequate security measures to 'check the deteriorating law and order situation in the constituency'.[8] On the same day, the BJP petitioned the ECO against rampant misutilization of government machinery by the Congress, the ruling party, for election meetings of Sonia Gandhi. It was alleged that 'hundreds of vehicles were arranged by the Motor Vehicles Department of the Road Transport Office' for Sonia Gandhi's election meetings.[9]

It was also alleged that the Congress was making elaborate, massive preparations for rigging and booth capturing in two assembly constituency

segments of Deogarh constituency. It is interesting to note that both these assembly constituencies are represented by the Congress Party. In addition, a former inspector general of police, who joined the BJP before the election, expressed his apprehension of rigging in Nowrangpur, Koraput, Kalahandi, and Phulbani constituencies by the ruling party. The BJP also expressed its fear that large-scale money and muscle power would be used in Berhampur by the Congress where Jayanti Patnaik, the wife of the chief minister, was pitted against the BJP candidate.[10] Also, the BJP petitioned the EC against the superintendent of police of Mayurbhanj for his failure to trace four BJP workers who were allegedly kidnapped by some local leaders of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) on the afternoon of February 26, 1998. In a separate incident the same day, a BJP jeep carrying party workers was allegedly attacked by JMM supporters.[11]

A more serious breach of peace and order was reported from Aska constituency where Naveen Patnaik, the president of the BJD, was a candidate. Some Congress supporters, participating in an election meeting in Aska, attacked the jeep of BJD workers. They uprooted the loudspeaker from the vehicle and snatched the mikes away from the BJD workers. It is alleged that the trouble started when BJD supporters raised slogans in favor of their party while passing through the meeting place of the Congress. This led to violence and, as a result, tension gripped the town. In order to control the situation and quell the violence, paramilitary forces had to stage a flag march in the town. In another incident in Jagatsinghpur constituency, shoot-at-sight orders were issued by the district collector following reports of pre-poll violence in some areas. Also, heavy police deployment became necessary on the eve of polling to ensure free and fair polls in the constituency.

In addition, certain other incidents also took place on the very day of polling. Note, for example, that in Sundargarh, one case of impersonation was reported. The reason why nothing more untoward happened there is due to the fact that both in Sundargarh and Rourkela the administration had made massive police arrangements and checked vehicles for arms and other contraband. Also, borders were sealed and blockades organized to nab criminals suspected of creating violence. In Keonjhar, polling was cancelled in a polling booth when a group of eight youths forcibly entered the booth and snatched unused ballot papers and tore them. When the mobile police party was informed, they fled, only to be apprehended later. Similar incidents took place at other polling booths also. As a result, repolling was ordered in 15 polling booths.[12]

III

It is quite clear that the electoral process is more than the mere orderly and peaceful means of electing a representative. Growing incidents of the use of undemocratic means to influence political decisions highlight the nexus between national (or for that matter, state) politics and the local power structure. As numerous local community studies show, the Indian village no more exemplifies a situation in which different privileges converge in the socially higher ranking caste, with the rest of the castes accepting or tolerating the political dominance of the ruling families. The traditional pattern of power relationship led students of the electoral process in India to speak of 'vote banks', signifying the mobilization of votes in favor of a particular party on the basis of patron–client relationships. While a gross oversimplification, the notion of vote banks did draw attention to a situation where the act of voting had, in a large number of cases, not assumed a personal or collective significance due largely to the fact that in addition to the novelty and strangeness of voting most of the people had not realized the importance of voting in changing, modifying, or drawing attention to depressed life conditions.

The situation has now drastically changed. As the promise of the good life which the modernization process implies, that is, the satisfaction of everybody's desire in a material sense,[13] deeply affects the consciousness of the people so far unaffected by the idea of self-regarding action for improving one's worldly situation, the meaning of the vote as an instrument of social change has increasingly pervaded people's consciousness. As this realization has progressively struck home, the hold of tradition, either in the socio-cultural or political sense, has attenuated. Aspirations related with the satisfaction of ordinary life needs pertaining to the acquisition of wealth, power, and prestige have escalated. However, there still exist too many impediments that thwart these aspirations. And when the mechanism of grievance redressal happens to be either inadequate or inaccessible or unresponsive, the only instrument for drawing attention of the powers that be remains periodical elections.

One other factor adds to the importance of elections as a leverage for inducing change in a highly regimented social system. Fifty years of the development process have generated numerous benefits for the un- and under-privileged sections of society. However, due to certain structural factors, these benefits either fail to reach the target groups or get to them only scantily. Moreover, the recourse to numbers as a resource, especially for the unprivileged and under-privileged, for influencing public

decisions and, through it, making suitable changes in the social structure, does not work because of the fragmentation of the deprived socioeconomic interests. The failure to convert numerical strength into effective political power impels different deprived social segments to develop linkages with political parties at the national level or to expect a better deal for themselves from particular political parties if they come to power. Even privileged groups, faced with the possibility of the curtailment of their privileges, have to forge linkages with national parties or to work for them in the hope of being protected or rewarded if they come to power.

All these factors taken together have made the electoral process a very competitive one. By the same token, it has also become very volatile. It has now been transformed into a process which stands proxy for more than performing the simple democratic function of selecting one's representatives. It now has to serve as an instrument of power mobilization in order to affect public decisions. As a result, the perception that the normal process of election may not fulfill one's own political expectations may push partisan activists to take matters into their own hands and intervene to produce a favorable outcome. This intervention may take the shape of intimidation, forcible prevention of voters from voting, bogus voting, snatching of ballot boxes, etc. As these extra-democratic means for influencing voters' choice are increasingly taken recourse to, the need to take strong security measures to ensure free and fair polls escalates the cost of holding periodical elections. Thus, stringent security measures are indicative of increased political competitiveness and heightened volatility of the electoral process.

If the field in which national or state political forces operate has become so politically sensitive, the forces themselves have, for various reasons, acquired sharpness and irrepressibility. The demise of one party dominance has created a situation in which no one party can by itself take hold of the reins of governance. There are, of course, strong contenders, such as the Congress and the BJP, vying for ascendance and control. However, fragmentation of the party space, reflecting the emergence and durability of regional parties, works against the assumption by any one of these contenders of making it to the apex of the power structure. Regional parties are well entrenched in their own habitats, and jealously guard their fortresses and resent encroachments. As long as these parties retain their salience and justify their existence, it is very difficult for the Congress or the BJP to become the dominant party.

Even if regional parties find their popular bases eroded, either because of their own weaknesses or the resurgence of national political forces, the return to status quo ante, that is, the reinstallation of a one party dominance system, is unthinkable. Alteration in ruling parties has now become perhaps an irreversible process because of the growing incapability of the state to meet the rising demands for access to societal resources. As this incapability becomes pronounced, the disillusionment of voters also increases, resulting in a shift in party allegiances. Once the ruling coalition develops acute internal squabbles which refuse to be amicably settled, a new election becomes necessary so that the stalemate in governance can be successfully broken. But elections fail to produce a decisive electoral verdict which can ensure stability in governance.

As difficulties in ensuring a stable government by a single party or by a coalition of parties persist, the need for a strong national party becomes urgent. This need, again, accentuates competition among different parties to expand their political bases in order to emerge strong enough to provide stability in governance. During the 1998 parliamentary election, there were, broadly speaking, three major contestants for gaining political supremacy: the Congress, the BJP, and the 13-party United Front (UF), which had to face the ignominy twice in its short tenure of withdrawal of support by the Congress. The UF did not present a cohesive entity and was always marked by differences—ideological, political, and tactical—that made its existence troublesome and uncertain. Moreover, the split in one of its major constituents, the Janata Dal, made it all the more vulnerable to the forces of disruption. What made the difficulties of the UF more acute was the fact that the political bases of its different constituents were restricted to particular states and certain regions in these states. These respective bases were not easily expandable. Nor was their coalescence into one coherent entity a likely occurrence in the near future. It is true that they combined to augment their strength with a view to successfully controlling the power apparatus of Indian society. However, their limitations prevented them from aggregating into a combination powerful enough to firmly grasp the reins of governance. Moreover, given the diversity and, not infrequently, irreconcilable differences, the tendency towards segmentation made their coming together very remote and their existence very fragile and brittle.

The Congress, with more than a century of glorious career before 1947 and its predominence in Indian politics for decades, is in decline.

It has been effectively displaced as the dominant party with its base almost completely eroded in many parts of India. While it is engaged in a life-and-death struggle, it has not yet given up hope to regain its old vigor and vitality and once again take the responsibility of guiding the destiny of India. Driven by a sense of lost glory and the promise of power, the Congress still remains a force in Indian politics and expects to re-emerge as a dominant political party.

The last, but not the least, significant contender for political ascendance and control is the BJP, which has been gradually picking up strength, to be sure; however, it has not yet been successful in breaking the barrier to political dominance. It is, therefore, a strong contender for political dominance.

Two factors prompt the BJP to make an all out effort to occupy the position vacated by the Congress. In the first place, it is convinced that the Congress has irretrievably lost its political advantage and is no more in a position to come to power on its own strength. Other political parties are there to capitalize on the loss of Congress power. However, they too are quite fragmented and incapable of emerging as a coherent and cohesive political force. Thus, there exists a political vacuum which the BJP expects to fill. The BJP sees the JD-led UF as a disintegrating force and the Congress as a corrupt party which pulled down two successive UF governments, thus creating political instability. And yet it sees in the Congress a major roadblock in its onward march to power. That is why the BJP, bent upon occupying the political space vacated by the Congress, decided in 1998 to project itself as a party which was capable of providing a *majaboot* (strong), *swachcha* (clean), and *sthira* (stable) government.[14] That is why, the BJP, in its resolution at Bhubaneshwar, announced, 'No other formation comes anywhere near our invincible position', claiming that the BJP is 'the only party which will occupy the political space being rapidly vacated by the other parties'.[15]

In the second place, it is very difficult for the BJP to forget or ignore the humiliation it had to suffer in 1996 when no party came forward to save its Atal Behari Vajpayee-led government from certain downfall in the face of a lack of majority in the Lok Sabha. As a matter of fact, all parties ganged up against it, and did their best to consign it to the status of an 'untouchable' party and prevent it from ever becoming a dominant force in Indian politics. The 1998 election offered it the opportunity to break away from the shackles of its rivals and forced it to helplessly, but not hopelessly, pull on. The BJP, therefore, set upon forging alliances with regional parties, such as the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, the

BJD in Orissa, the NTR TDP (LP) led by Laxmi Parvathi in Andhra Pradesh, and so on. These alliances, the BJP claimed, were positive proof that it was no longer dogged by the stigma of 'political untouchability'. Moreover, in the prevailing political situation, the only effective strategy for the BJP was to forge pre-poll alliances in order to ensure committed support so that, even if the BJP did not by itself get a majority of seats, it would get the support of its alliance partners in forming the government.

What is forcefully underlined by the preceding discussion is that the political situation prevailing on the eve of the 1998 Lok Sabha election was quite fluid. In this fluid situation, all political parties or their different combinations expected to be the major beneficiary of political uncertainty and they, accordingly, mobilized their resources to put up a vigorous electoral fight to emerge victorious. This made the 1998 Lok Sabha election quite competitive and hard fought. The stakes were very high and the contenders very keen and determined to give a tough fight. It is against this background that the 1998 Lok Sabha election in Orissa can be fruitfully viewed and reviewed.

IV

As indicated earlier, one of the notable outcomes of the 1998 Lok Sabha election in Orissa was the remarkable success of the BJP. Only two years earlier, the BJP had failed to win a single Lok Sabha seat, although its extensive and strong support base in the northwestern region of the state was amply demonstrated. The key factor in the electoral success of the BJP was, of course, the decimation of the Janata Dal, mainly due to two reasons. First, after receiving a humiliating electoral defeat by the Congress in the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the JD was obliged, in its bid to form a UF government at the national level, to seek the support of other parties. This created an anomalous situation for the Orissa JD inasmuch as it was now forced to play a contradictory role: While it had to oppose and do its best to displace the Congress in the state, it was forced to rely on its support at the national level. This contradiction created a wide fissure in the state JD, which finally led to its marginalization in state politics. Second, the death of Biju Patnaik, the most venerated political figure of Orissa, in May 1997 left the party without any leader of stature whose moderating influence could reconcile differences, curb self-aggrandizing tendencies in the party, keep peace, and

guide its destiny. His death left the party with lieutenants, but no commander.

With the death of Biju Patnaik, the contradictions faced by the Orissa JD exacerbated the differences within it. Opinions about what the JD should do to terminate these contradictions were sharply divided. One stream of opinion favored the formation of a regional party; another stream talked of merging into the BJP; while a third pressed for an electoral alliance with the BJP after the state JD had broken away from the national JD and formed itself into a regional party. These different opinions had been floating around in the party since the UF came to power at the center. However, as the possibility of a fresh election loomed large on the political horizon, the pressure for a decision in favor of forming a regional party mounted. Note, for example, that a meeting of senior JD leaders and MLAs at Bhubaneshwar on December 7, 1997 discussed the move reportedly initiated by a section of the JD and passed a resolution directly criticizing the BJP for encouraging defections in the JD.[16] Obviously, at this point in time, there was no strong support for constituting a regional party for facilitating an electoral alliance with the BJP. It was, therefore, natural that the resolution asserted that the Dal would remain united and make efforts to prevent division of anti-Congress votes. What is significant about the deliberations of this meeting is that a majority of Dal MLAs, particularly from western Orissa and who reportedly were in favor of forming a regional party and entering into an electoral alliance with the BJP—because the BJP had already emerged in their region as a strong political force and was bent upon consolidating its position—clearly expressed their aversion to the type of politics practised by the BJP.[17]

There is, no doubt, reflected in this the self-interest of these MLAs who considered the BJP to be a party that could eclipse their own political careers. However, self-interest was not a strong deterrent to the forces favoring change. On December 8, 1997, for example, a group of seven pro-BJP Dal MLAs called on the speaker of the state legislative and reportedly submitted to him a letter containing signatures of 17 Dal MLAs and demanded a separate block for them in the Vidhan Sabha.[18] But the dissidents later clarified that the submission of such a letter was withheld in view of the fact that, on the one hand, they were afraid of back-tracking by some of the signatories and, on the other, four of the signatories had already been won over by the no changers. This only delayed the split, with dissident leaders adopting a wait-and-watch policy. However, it was quite clear that a sizable number of senior Dal

leaders were rooting for the formation of a regional party to ensure a one-to-one contest against the Congress in the ensuing Lok Sabha election.

Events soon caught up with the JD to make its split imminent. On December 10, 1997 the dissidents received a shot in the arm when Naveen Patnaik, former MP and son of late Biju Patnaik, threw in his lot with them. The dissidents made their intentions of floating a regional party and entering into an electoral alliance with the BJP very clear. They also decided to meet Pramod Mahajan to finalize the modalities of the proposed alliance. It was further decided to formally announce the split on December 15, 1998 and christen the new party as Kalinga Janata Dal or Janata Dal (Biju). Dilip Kumar Ray, the then union food processing minister spearheading the campaign for a regional party, flew to Bhubaneshwar to apprise the dissidents about talks with central JD leaders.[19] The JD central leadership had taken a strong line against any arrangement that included the BJP. Sharad Yadav, the JD President, had made it clear that they were against any move that led to an understanding with the BJP.[20] But the dissidents insisted that their main objective was to unite all anti-Congress forces in Orissa to fight and hopefully defeat the Congress. To do so it was, the dissidents argued, necessary to have the active cooperation of the BJP. As Naveen Patnaik observed, 'We have told the party's central leaders categorically that the anti-BJP line will not hold good in Orissa. This has become imperative if the corrupt government headed by J.B. Patnaik is to be uprooted.'[21]

But to allow a JD–BJP electoral alliance in Orissa would have been suicidal for the JD in view of its strong espousal of the secularist stance and its well publicized opposition to the BJP as a non-secular party. The growing dissidence in Orissa, therefore, forced a catch-22 situation on the central leadership. In the meantime, the crisis in the state Dal deepened as a result of the resignation on December 13, 1997 of Ashok Das, the leader of the opposition in the state legislature.[22] Intense political activities ensued. Faction leaders began meeting with their supporters to chalk out their strategies to meet the emergent situation. It is true that the election of the leader of the opposition took precedence over the issue of the formation of a regional party. However, it did not close this issue. It is also true that the central leadership announced the formation of a high power steering committee to oversee the ensuing Lok Sabha polls in Orissa. This led some of the advocates of a regional party to have second thoughts about it. Meanwhile, certain factors created a

feeling of uncertainty and, therefore, hesitation in the ranks of the dissidents. First, the emergence of Naveen Patnaik as leader of the dissidents was resented by other senior dissident leaders. Second, the initiative taken by the western Orissa leaders in announcing in Delhi the formation of a regional party also created strong resentment among party MLAs, especially from coastal Orissa. And, lastly, a group led by Bijay Mohapatra, who had joined hands with the western Orissa lobby, was persuaded by the central leadership not to precipitate matters by insisting on a regional party.[23]

In addition, 18 Orissa JD MLAs announced their opposition to any understanding or alliance with the BJP. They also faxed their decision to the central leadership.[24] However, all these developments did not deter the dissidents, who served an ultimatum on December 13, 1997 to the central leadership to appoint Naveen Patnaik as president of the state unit to avert an imminent split.[25] They also demanded that the central leadership should provide autonomy to the Orissa unit and make a public announcement to this effect. The central leadership sought two days' time to consider their demand. However, despite the fact that the dissidents twice extended the deadline for the central leadership to respond to their demands, they waited in vain.[26] Without waiting for the deadline, they, therefore, intensified their efforts to form a regional party. They mended their fences and worked out a compromise formula according to which Bijay Mohapatra was offered the post of chairman of the steering committee to oversee the ensuing Lok Sabha election and another important senior leader, Ramakrishna Patnaik, was to be elected as leader of the opposition.[27] Also, the dissidents, becoming very restive over the dithering attitude of the central leadership, decided to hand over a letter to the Speaker of the assembly asking for a separate seat arrangement for them in the assembly.

Finally, the JD split on December 15, 1997 with as many as 29 of the 43 Dal MLAs forming a separate unit called the Janata Dal (Biju) or BJD headed by Naveen Patnaik. Another senior leader, Ramakrishna Patnaik, was elected leader of the new party in the assembly. The dissidents claimed that four more Dal MLAs would join their ranks.[28] The new formation also asked the Speaker to formalize the split which he did on December 18, 1997 after a delay of two days marked by a high degree of political tension.[29] With the formation of the BJD, the way was finally cleared for an electoral alliance with the BJP. Bijay Mohapatra declared that the BJD would work out an alliance with non-Congress forces, including the BJP and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha

(JMM), to defeat the Congress. Venkiah Naidu, general secretary of the BJP, announced on December 19, 1997 his party's decision to formalize its alliance with the BJP, and soon the alliance became a reality.[30]

V

The split in the JD and the electoral alliance between the BJD and the BJP drastically changed political equations in Orissa. If it left the JD utterly confused, almost paralyzed, and its future dim and dismal, it also posed a serious challenge to Congress dominance in Orissa. This turned out later to be a major setback for the Congress, in general, and J.B. Patnaik, the Congress chief minister, in particular. The grassroots workers of the JD, who could not reconcile themselves to their party seeking support from the Congress, their arch rival in the state, found themselves in a situation where it became difficult for them to discriminate friends from foes. But more than this, it started a spate of desertions from the party. Note, for example, that the split had considerably eroded the support base of Shrikant Jena, a central minister and a leader of promise, as many of his supporters deserted him in the wake of the split. In addition, many veteran leaders, who were very close to Ashoka Das, switched their allegiance to the BJD. The split was welcomed by young JD workers who felt that they could now fight their political enemy—the Congress—with the support of the BJP.[31]

Desertions from the JD included Arjun Charan Sethi, a sitting MLA and a general secretary, who joined the BJD on December 19, 1997 and was promised a BJD ticket to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Bhadrak. On January 4, 1998, the entire Rayagada district Janata Dal merged with the BJD. It was also reported that Prabhat Samantray, general secretary of the JD at the national level, along with two former JD ministers and several other leaders, met several BJD leaders to discuss their joining the BJD.[32] In Dhenkanal, two ex-MLAs joined the BJD. Also, numerous sarpanches and panchayat samiti members shifted their allegiance to the BJD.[33] On January 28, 1998, the JD received a fresh jolt when former JD minister, Narasingh Mishra, resigned as leader of the Dal legislature party in protest against the letter written by Srikant Jena to Naveen Patnaik. In this letter Jena criticized the party government under the leadership of Biju Patnaik between 1990 and 1995. In his resignation letter sent to Sharad Yadav, Mishra said that if a member of

the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of the party criticizes the decision taken by his party, 'then I as a member of that Cabinet should resign on moral grounds'.[34] This in itself was a reflection of the prevailing confusion in the JD. What added to it was also the fact that the stronghold of the JD, Jajpur parliamentary constituency and the political playfield of Ashoka Das, the state JD president, crumbled when more than 100 workers, including some former block panchayat samiti and municipality chairmen, joined the BJD.[35]

The greatly weakened position of the Orissa JD is evidenced by several factors. First, the split divided the party vertically, eroding both its leadership rank and grassroots support base with a large number of leaders and party activists going over to the BJD. Second, the split adversely affected not only collective but also individual political fortunes. Insofar as the collective fortune of the JD was concerned, the morale in its rank and file was abominably low and some of its key leaders were too disenchanted to take interest in party activities. For example, three top JD leaders stopped attending any organizational meetings and were reportedly on the verge of joining the BJD.[36] In addition, the JD faced a severe resource crunch. As a result, it was forced to concentrate its efforts in a few constituencies—in five constituencies to be precise—where its candidates were thought to have winning chances in the ensuing Lok Sabha election.[37] Another indicator of the extreme paucity of resources can be had from the fact that Ashoka Das made an appeal on February 8, 1998 to the voters to contribute Rs 5 each to the party coffers for election expenditure.[38] He admitted that the JD was passing through a severe resource crisis. The Dal did field candidates in 16 constituencies, but it had no funds to launch election compaigns. Even central JD leaders did not help, either monetarily or by sending national leaders, to campaign for the JD candidates.[39]

It is no wonder, then, that Naveen Patnaik, the president of the BJD, described the JD as a party of refuse[40] and people in general wondered whether the JD would open its account at all in the 1998 Lok Sabha election.[41] And as things turned out, it did not. In terms of individual prospects of success at the electoral hustings, the difficulties are well illustrated by the case of Srikant Jena.

Acclaimed to be a very promising leader of the Orissa JD and supposed by many to be the most likely successor to Biju Patnaik, Jena was elected in 1996 from Kendrapara parliamentary constituency defeating his nearest Congress rival by a margin of 40,000 votes. But with the split in the JD, he found his support base in Kendrapara totally eroded. He,

therefore, began a search for a safe seat. And finding that there were no safe seats now for JD candidates, he went through a process of vacillation, which proved to be highly embarrassing for his party. Finding Jena unwilling to contest from Kendrapara, the JD election committee decided on January 28, 1998 to put him up from Balasore. But Jena was still undecided; he also expressed his desire not to contest from Kendrapara. The next day Jena decided to contest from Dhenkanal, but on the morning of February 4, 1998, he suddenly changed his mind and filed his nomination papers from Kendrapara. This was highly embarrassing for the JD because anothers individual had already been handed over the ticket for this seat. Needless to say, Jena was badly defeated polling less than a 100,000 votes.

If the split found the JD in complete disarray, the alliance between the BJD and BJP did not proceed smoothly; it evoked strong opposition in both parties. Both parties had to face rebellion in their own respective ranks. Note, for example, that almost all district units of the BJP raised their voice against the proposed alliance. They faxed on December 26, 1997, a message to the BJP's central office in New Delhi requesting L.K. Advani 'to cancel the proposed tie-up with the BJD if it persisted in its demand for a major share of Lok Sabha seats'.[42] This was in reaction to Bijay Mohapatra's claim that the BJD would contest a majority of the Lok Sabha seats. The BJP district chairmen insisted in their fax message that the BJP party workers wanted unconditional support from the BJD, if the latters' sole aim was to defeat the Congress. Obviously, then, BJP activists in Orissa were convinced that it was their party that was to play a major rule in mounting an all-out effort to defeat the Congress and that the BJD or any other party would simply help the BJP do so.

But the BJD had quite different ideas. For the activists, the party's *raison d'etre* was 'to exploit to the hilt'[43] Biju's legacy and work under his son's leadership to fulfil his father's dream. It was, therefore, the BJD that would have to take the leadership in the fight against the Congress. As such, the BJD must then contest from a majority of the Lok Sabha seats. It is against this conflicting perception that the meeting between the BJD and BJP took place at the state level. After three rounds of meetings, no progress was made in respect of allocation of seats between them. The BJD representatives felt that while the central leadership was quite enthusiastic about poll understanding with the new regional party, the state leadership (of the BJP) was not at all in favour of it.[44] The state BJP was apprehensive that the alliance with the BJD would dilute the hold of its leaders over the party organization. In

addition, both the parties staked their claim to fight the election even in those constituencies where they did not enjoy much support.

In the face of irreconcilable postures and claims made by the two parties, the high commands of both parties were forced to come out with a statement that the alliance between them was there to stay and that there were no differences between them over seat adjustment.[45] However, it was clear that the main problem in seat adjustment was the state BJP's claim to field their candidates in three key constituencies in coastal Orissa—Cuttack, Puri, and Bhubaneshwar. The BJD's response to this demand was forthright: To let the BJP contest from these constituencies was to allow the Congress an easy walk over. When the problem of seat adjustment could not be tackled at the state level, the talks moved to Delhi, where an agreement on seat adjustment was reached. According to this agreement, the BJD would contest in 12 and the BJP in nine Lok Sabha constituencies.[46] What is obvious from this agreement is that the BJD, despite the unwillingness, even opposition, of the state unit of the BJP, got a lion's share in seat distribution. Also, it restricted the BJP to the northwestern region of the state denying it any seat in the coastal, more developed, region. As we shall see shortly, this agreement created a lot of difficulties for both alliance partners. However, the BJD was satisfied with the agreement because it recognized its higher status and the BJP considered stooping down to conquer perhaps a better strategy.

VI

The BJD and the BJP did agree on seat adjustment. However, the agreement shook the alliance partners to their roots. The source of the trouble was the pattern of seat adjustment itself. If the BJP was kept out of coastal Orissa, so was the BJD prevented from contesting from northwestern Orissa, except for Sambalpur where, in fact, it faced a lot of trouble. As a direct result of it, the BJD leaders of northwestern Orissa and the BJP leaders of coastal Orissa felt cheated and the channels of their political ascendance blocked. This engendered frustration and anger in both parties; anger, in turn, prompted them to act in a way that brought both the alliance partners to the brink of disaster. The leaders and party activists in each of these regions rose in rebellion against their respective parties. It is true that the rebellion was ultimately quelled; however, it created almost a permanent regional divide between both parties.

As was indicated earlier, senior JD leaders and MLAs had, in a meeting, on December 7, 1997, passed a resolution opposing the transformation of the Orissa JD into a regional party and entering into an electoral alliance with the BJP with the express purpose of driving the Congress out of power. The move to create a new regional entity was initiated mainly by the leaders of northwestern Orissa. And when some of the JD leaders from this region supported the resolution, most JD leaders came to the hasty conclusion that there was no regional divide in the party. As Narsingh Mishra, a former JD minister, emphatically maintained, the 'hoax' of the western Orissa lobby was exposed at yesterday's meeting 'and that a majority of the party MLAs (from western Orissa) did not subscribe to the theory of [a] western Orissa lobby'.[47] But he was soon to be proved false. The new regional entity in the form of the BJD did come into being and JD leaders from northwestern Orissa played a major part in its creation.

But when the seat adjustment between the BJD and the BJP robbed these leaders of any significant role in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections and posed a serious threat to their meaningful political career, their frustration and anger knew no bounds. One of these leaders, A.U. Singhdeo, a senior vice-president of the BJD PAC, had a special grouse. He had set his eyes on Bolangir parliamentary constituency. But this constituency was allotted to the BJP. Thus Singhdeo felt deprived of a constituency. What vexed him more was the fact that the candidate for this seat was none else than the BJD president's own niece-in-law. Enraged by these developments, Singhdeo shot off a letter of resignation to Naveen Patnaik, pointing out that the seat arrangement with the BJP sent a wrong signal to the people. Elaborating, he observed that 'people have started talking that the BJD is the party of a particular region and not entire Orissa....'[48] He further pointed out that the BJD was to field its candidate from only one seat, Sambalpur, in western Orissa. However, the projected candidate from this seat had repeatedly expressed his unwillingness to contest. As such, it was difficult to save the party organization in western Orissa.[49]

Adding fuel to the fire of resentment among northwestern BJD leaders and activists was the denial of party ticket to Prasanna Acharya, a senior leader and secretary-general of the BJD, for contesting from Sambalpur. Speculations that besides Singhdeo, Acharya and another senior leader, Kamala Das, were contemplating to resign from the party were rife.[50] They felt that they had failed to safeguard the interests of western Orissa. The butt of their anger was reportedly Bijay Mohapatra,

the chairman of the BJD PAC, who had played a key role in the talks for seat adjustment. Also, he was reportedly trying his best to eliminate persons close to Naveen Patnaik, including Singhdeo and Acharya.[51] Faced with these developments, Naveen Patnaik admitted that Singhdeo had resigned. But he said that his resignation would not be accepted and that dissension in the party would soon subside. When the BJD PAC met on January 24, 1998 it took stock of the situation and expressed its determination to make the alliance a success.

Top BJD leaders were, however, very worried about these developments. In a bid to mollify Singhdeo, five top leaders of the BJD, including Naveen Patnaik, met Singhdeo at his residence on January 29, 1998 and requested him to accept the post of chairman of the campaign committee, which he declined.[52] He, however, assured them that he would work for the success of the BJD–BJP alliance. But he insisted that the party must create opportunities for the discussion of the problems facing western Orissa. The weak Congress leadership did not allow the development of the region; the BJD must, therefore, avoid this mistake. However, the deep psychological divide between the leaders of western and coastal Orissa persisted. As many as eight party functionaries belonging mostly to western Orissa resigned on February 4, 1998 'protesting against the manner in which the regional outfit was being run.'[53] Expressing their unhappiness, they emphasized that 'a feeling was gaining ground that decisions were being taken by one or two leaders belonging to coastal Orissa' and that 'these leaders were interfering in district party affairs.'[54] They, therefore, did not want to continue in 'ornamental' party posts any longer.

Singhdeo was placated and Prasanna Acharya agreed to become the party nominee for Sambalpur at the last moment. This did defuse the crisis to a certain extent. However, the psychological divide between the leaders of the two regions persisted. Singhdeo wrote a letter to the party president pointing out that his dream of the new party taking up various issues of western Orissa, including drought, crop loss, unemployment, distress sale of children, etc. did not seem to be relevant for the BJD.[55] And on top of all this, a large number of BJD activists in the western districts were returning to the JD.[56] It is true that this large-scale exodus could not have affected in any way the poll prospects of the BJD. However, it certainly is a major factor in the organizational vitality of the BJD in western Orissa.

If the BJD faced internal squabbles as a direct consequent of its agreement with the BJP on seat adjustment, the BJP was equally troubled by

it. But there was an additional factor that made organizational cohesion very difficult to attain. The control of the power apparatus in the parlay became very important as the party's chance for capturing power positions at the state and national levels became brighter. Moreover, when the party found it possible to get entry into power positions that it had coveted for long, it set upon expanding its support base by spreading its net of recruitment far and wide by making it possible for all those who wanted to join it in order to promote their own career prospects through the realization of collective objectives. While the influx of new members in a party creates the problem of adjustment and integration between the old and new members, the competition for control of the power apparatus in a party constitutes a durable feature of any party: These factions made the BJP a highly competitive party internally, even though it usually gives the impression of an ideologically homogeneous and organizationally cohesive entity. However, seat adjustment with the BJD threw its organization almost out of gear.

In Sambalpur, for example, factional rivalry in the BJP's district unit came into the open when six members of the newly constituted district committee resigned on December 4, 1997. They alleged that undue importance was being given to new entrants who had joined the party recently by resigning from the Congress.[57] In Koraput, on the other hand, the factional fight in the BJP was induced by an attempt by different factions to control the district organization with a view to gaining an influential say in the selection of candidates. The bone of contention was the post of president of the district unit itself. Traditionally, though the district has been a Congress bastion—it still is, largely due to its long time MP Giridhar Gomang—the BJP gained considerable ground in Koraput recently when its popularity was proved beyond any doubt in the gram panchayat election. The then president of the district unit, K. Hota, and the former president, K.C. Mohapatra, were vying for the post. Hota had to face a lot of opposition internally because party workers were dissatisfied with his style of functioning. Hota's followers were busy mobilizing support on the grounds that he was instrumental not only in mobilizing support for the party in numerous tribal villages but also because he had successfully recruited many senior JD and Congress leaders in the party. As against this, his opponents argued that the district unit needed a strong and dynamic leader capable of guiding the destiny of the party in the emergent situation. When the rival factions failed to come to any agreement, the matter was submitted to the state unit for decision.

The BJP encountered a near revolt against the central leadership for conceding a majority of seats to the BJD without getting prestigious seats in coastal Orissa on which the state BJP was insistent. Five senior leaders—Prasanta Nanda, vice-president Manmoham Sonal, general-secretary Rudra Narayan Pani, secretary Shyamananda Mohapatra, and the treasurer—were reported to have resigned from the party.[58] It is interesting to note that all these leaders, except Samal, were aspirants for party tickets to contest the Lok Sabha election from different constituencies in central Orissa. The seat adjustment dashed their hopes, to be true; however, their near-revolt had wider support. Nanda, along with numerous BJP workers from coastal districts, sat inside the BJP office in silent protest. Outside, hundreds of party workers thronged the party office to express their solidarity with Nanda.[59] Juel Oram, the state BJP president, rushed to Bhubaneshwar from Sundergarh and had a day-long meeting with the rebels but failed to persuade Nanda to give up his silent protest.[60]

The revolt spread out when the party units of Dhenkanal and Sambalpur demanded immediate breaking of the alliance with the BJD. The Dhenkanal unit went as far as to demand not only breaking of the alliance but also allowing Rudra Pani, a senior leader, to contest from the Dhenkanal seat on the BJP ticket; otherwise it would field Pani as an independent candidate. The workers from Shambalpur threatened to prevent Oram from filing his nomination papers if their demand was not conceded.[61]

It was only when Pyarelal Khandelwal, the BJP's central observer for Orissa, arrived in Bhubaneshwar that the revolt subsided. And state leaders admitted that seat adjustments were a temporary loss.[62]

VII

Despite the trouble the BJD–BJP alliance caused in both parties, it became a functioning reality in Orissa and was declared, by Sushma Swaraj, general-secretary of the BJP and its firebrand spokesperson, to have 'clicked with voters beyond expectations'.[63] However, problems of coordination still plagued the alliance; in addition, there was also the ego problem easily stirred up by the perception on the part of alliance partners of being slighted or being treated as unequal. But despite these problems, the leadership in both the parties was determined to make the alliance a success.

The alliance, as Sushma Swaraj had boldly claimed, did trounce the Congress and won a major chunk of the total Lok Sabha seats. The Congress experienced this upset in only a span of two years. How did this come about? Failure of the Congress to consolidate the gains it made in 1996 stems basically from four major factors. The first of these factors, which applies universally to all political parties, has to do with the gap between the promise and performance of a ruling party. As indicated earlier, five decades of development enterprise have heightened people's expectations from the government insofar as their life conditions are concerned. The promise of a better life materially and the hope that the progeny of the current generation of people will have better life chances have immensely added to the burden of the state. It not only has to see to it that the stock of goods and services goes on increasing rapidly, but also that a reasonably equitable pattern of distribution be introduced and forcefully maintained. Thus, the legitimacy of a government now does not rest on its divinity or social origin but on the extent to which it can satisfy the hopes and aspirations of the people for material well-being. In other words, what is crucial to the sustenance of the legitimacy of a government is its performance.

Two factors impinge on the capacity of a government to perform well. In its anxiety to win votes by influencing people located in a highly differentiated factual order, parties competing for political ascendance make tall promises which they cannot fulfil. As Debdas Thakur, referring to the promises the parties made to the voters in 1998, notes:

> This time too, western Orissa reels under a development package that promises nothing new. And the dramatic culmination came yesterday from ... L.K. Advani. Given a chance, Advani told the people ..., the party will not be found wanting as far as development—specifically the KBK type—is concerned. And if not to be left behind, Sonia today recalled Rajiv's 'love' for this region and new schemes introduced during his governance.
>
> The Biju Janata Dal on its part has promised to eradicate poverty, malnutrition and what not from that region. It was one of Biju's dreams, you are told. The Congress too has assured the people to rev up all pending projects. These parties have made development the major, or perhaps, the only plank while trying to touch the populist pulse. Malnutrition, starvation, drought, irrigation, crop insurance, bridges, infrastructure—mention anyone of these, and it is there in (sic) every politician's lips.[64]

But once a party gets swept to power, it finds itself unable to keep its promises. For one thing, the capacity of the economy is limited; it cannot fulfil the promises parties in their anxiety to control the power apparatus of society make. For another, once a party comes to power, it has to devote a large part of its energy in maintaining itself in the saddle, than driving the horse it rides toward its destination. As a result, as the gap between promise and performance widens and the hopes and aspirations of the people get increasingly frustrated, the support base of the ruling party begins to erode. With voters turning away from the ruling party, it finds it extremely difficult to defend its power position.

This is exactly what happened to the Congress Party in the 1998 election. The Congress Chief Minister, J.B. Patnaik, claimed that the Congress government in the state had completed two major irrigation projects—the Mahanadi–Chitrotpala and Birupagenguti projects. Among other achievements, he cited the successful implementation of the midday meal scheme in schools, the Rs 2 for a kg of rice scheme for people below the poverty line, and the old age pension scheme. In addition, the Congress regime entered, in the span of two years, into 32 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with foreign companies to initiate different projects in Orissa for its development. However, two things must be noted here. First, many of the schemes initiated by the Orissa Congress government, such as old age pension and mid-day meal for school children, were only ameliorative; they did not contribute much to the economic vitality and dynamism of a people facing acute economic distress. Second, other projects or MOUs do not by any means ease the current economic problems of the people needing massive help here and now to regenerate their earning capacities.

In addition, the failure of the Congress government to give effect to the much publicized Korput–Balangir–Kalahandi (KBK) plan announced with great fanfare by the then prime minister, Narasimha Rao, to change the economic face of western Orissa was one of the major causes for the erosion of the legitimacy of the Congress government. Apart from the failure of the Congress government in improving the health of the economy, its failure to keep the promises it had made in different areas of the state was also a major contributory factor in its electoral upset. To take a few examples, J.B. Patnaik had promised in 1996 at least five steel plants for Keonjhar, but none materialized.[65] The question of the North Orissa University is another example. The establishment of a university in the northern part of Orissa was approved by the government long ago. However, there was a dispute, between

Mayurbhanj and Balasore, about its location. The Congress government adopted a dilly-dallying stance, antagonizing the people in both districts.[66] That the failure of the Congress Party to improve the health of the state economy was creating disaffection is exemplified by the breaking of a 33-year-old association with the Congress Party by a senior Congress leader, Rabi Kanungo. As Kanungo pointed out, he was skeptical of any economic progress in the state under the Congress regime. As he said, 'I am deserting the Congress as it has miserably failed to meet the aspiration of the people of the state....'[67]

Second, one of the most important structural properties of a democratic party like the Congress is its factional character, which is instrumental not only in recruiting activists, but also provides the channel through which party activists and leaders pursue their objective of gaining access to and controlling power positions in the party and, through it, at various levels of government. This makes the party highly competitive in which no holds are barred and gaining an upper land is the zero-sum power game. The intensity of factional infighting knows no bound when elections to different organs of the party itself or the government at different levels take place. Each of the factions seeks to outbid rival factions in getting party tickets. Thus, at different levels of the party organization struggle for power goes on unabated in which the relative power position determines which faction gets how many nominations, which, in turn, confirms a particular faction's relative power position in the party. The wide-spaced factional struggle for superiority in the Congress, especially the struggle for party tickets, creates bad blood among party workers, attenuates party loyalty, encourages defections, and adversely affects the electoral fortunes of the party.

This is well illustrated by Sundargarh Lok Sabha constituency. Sundargarh, a reserved constituency for Schedule Tribes, has a total of 1.15 million voters, of which tribals, mostly Christian, constitute nearly 60 percent. It is also a highly competitive constituency where the fortunes of the Congress have swung wildly in the last 11 elections, with the Congress winning only six times. In the 1996 parliamentary elections, Frida Topno, a Christian, was the Congress candidate who won the election only with 27.75 percent of the popular vote as against JMM's 25.64 percent, BJP's 23.50 percent, and Janata Dal's about 19 percent. In the 1998 elections, Topno was denied the Congress ticket even after her candidature was cleared in the first list.[68] However, her candidature was struck down reportedly at the behest of Forest Minister, Kishore Chandra Patel, who represents the Sundargarh legislative

assembly. At his instance, Sunil Kumar Singhdeo, a tribal chieftain but not a Christian and a successful chartered accountant, was given the party ticket against Topno, Congress MLA five times, MP for two consecutive terms, and an undisputed leader of the Christian community in Sundargarh.

This angered the Christian voters and led to the resignation of Bijay Toppo, a relative of Topno and a prominent Christian tribal leader, a member of the Pradesh Congress Committee and vice-president of Sundargarh District Congress Committee. Toppo joined the BJP and helped it win the Sundargarh seat by polling 47.71 percent of the votes as against Congress' 28.69 percent.

Third, each election witnesses movement of party activists and leaders from one party to another either because their hopes of getting a party nomination have been belied or because they feel that they would have better prospects elsewhere. As such, a party loses some of its activists as well as gains some new members. But this does not necessarily set the balance right. If the party wins some key activists and workers, it also loses a good chunk of its support base, which is not necessarily compensated for by new entrants who pose the difficult problem of integration and a threat to old members. In 1998, too, there was a lot of movement of activists and leaders from one party to another. The Congress also suffered its share of desertions and lost four well-known leaders, including former PCC president, Nityananda Mishra; two former MPs, Anadi Charan Sahu and Gopinath; and former party spokesman Baishnab Charan Parida. In addition, a former MLA of Mayurbhanj and a Keonjhar zilla parishad member also left the party. All these desertions greatly weakened the Congress. It is true that Bhakta Charan Das, MP from Kalahandi, and Mustafiz Ahmed, a prominent JD leader, joined the party and were given party tickets respectively from Kalahandi and Cuttack. But both were defeated.

And, lastly, the image of many Congress leaders and candidates was tainted by corruption, and this adversely affected the Congress' electoral fortune. For example, the Congress candidate from Deogarh was reported to have been involved in the cooking gas scandal and to have amassed huge property.[69] Likewise, in Phulbani constituency, the Congress candidate, Mrityunjaya Naik, was alleged to be involved in the LPG agency allotment scandal and was to be charagesheeted by the CBI.[70] Needless to say, the Congress lost this seat as it did Deogarh to the BJP. Even if a candidate is not directly involved in a scandal, the involvement of a prominent party leader in corrupt practices adversely

affects the candidate's poll chances. A case in point is Kendrapara constituency. The Congress minister for higher education was involved in a sex scandal in Kendrapara which tarnished the Congress image very badly. In order to improve its image, the Congress put up a candidate with no political experience. However, it did not help the Congress, as it lost to the BJP.

VIII

The operation of these four factors contributed to a large shift in voter support away from the Congress. Out of the 16 seats it had captured in the 1996 election, it could retain only four. Even in these constituencies, except Jagatsinghpur, its vote share registered a decline—12 percent in Berhampur, 7 percent in Koraput, and 5 percent in Nowrangpur. It lost six seats to the BJD and seven to the BJP. The margin of win of the BJP over the Congress was nowhere less than 10 percent. In one constituency, Balangir, this margin touched 27 percentage points; in two constituencies it was about 20 percent. In order to appreciate the Congress losses, one should note that many Congress stalwarts, including three former union ministers, were humbled. The Congress suffered major shocks in Kalahandi, Dhenkanal, and Sambalpur—all considered to be Congress bastions.

If the Congress lost heavily in the 1998 elections, the JD–Left alliance, which contested 20 seats, was badly mauled. The alliance failed to secure a single seat. Even the high profile JD union minister, Srikant Jena, was relegated to third position. The JD lost one seat, Jajpur, to the Congress and three seats—Cuttack, Kendrapara, and Aska—to the BJD. Thus the BJP–BJD combine captured 76 percent of the total Lok Sabha seats in Orissa. What is also impressive is the fact that its vote share was more than the vote share of the Congress and the Dal–Left combine put together, polling 48.68 percent votes. There occurred a 3.98 percent swing away from the Congress which polled 40.98 percent. The performance of the BJD is spectacular since, as a new entrant in Orissa politics, it polled 27.52 percent of the total valid votes winning nine out of the 12 seats it contested. Swing in favour of the BJP was 7.75 percent, allowing it to win seven out of the nine seats it contested. The growth of the BJP in Orissa has been gradual but steady. Its fortunes started to look up from 1991 when it polled 9.86 percent of the votes by contesting 20 Lok Sabha seats; its vote share went up to 13.44 percent in

1996 without winning a single seat. In 1998, however, its vote share went up to 21.16 percent. The JD is, however, the worst sufferer; its vote share drastically dropped to 4.92 percent from 30.05 percent in 1996. All candidates of the JD, except one from Jajpur, lost their deposits. The Left parties have seen further curtailment in their share of popular votes—it came down to 1.39 percent in 1998 from 2.03 percent in 1996.

It is true that the BJP–BJD alliance swept the 1998 Lok Sabha polls in Orissa. However, each of the alliance partners is restricted to a particular region—the BJP in northwestern Orissa and the BJD in coastal Orissa. What is also important in this connection is the fact that while the Congress has lost heavily, it still is a living force; it is the second party after the winner in all the 16 constituencies where its candidates were defeated. If something goes wrong with the BJP–BJD alliance, its beneficiary will certainly be the Congress Party. Moreover, the very fact that the partners of the BJP–BJD combine are regionally circumscribed, each of them will try hard to extend its zone of influence to the region controlled by the other. This is bound to sour the relationship between the BJP and the BJD. If this happens, only the Congress will take advantage of this. Thus, the Congress may be down, but it is not out of Orissa politics yet.

Notes and References

1. Ramashray Roy, 'General Elections 1996: BJP's Emergence as the Third Force in Orissa', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, Nos 44 & 45, November 8–14, 1997, p. 2893.
2. The EC claimed that its decision to tighten contesting rules led to a sharp drop in the number of contestants in the 1998 Lok Sabha election. According to it, the number of contestants came down to 32 percent as against the 1996 figure. Also, the average number of candidates per constituency dropped sharply from 30.28 to 9.64 percent (*The Indian Express*, Bhubaneshwar, February 5, 1998). In Orissa, the Chief Election Commissioner claimed that there was a discernible 40.26 percent decline in the number of candidates against the 1996 figure. Also, there were only 20 independents as against 137 in 1996 (*The Indian Express*, Bhubaneshwar, February 10, 1998).
3. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 15, 1998.
4. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 7, 1998.
5. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 4, 1998.
6. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 3, 1998.
7. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 25, 1998. In Deogarh constituency, voters boycotted the poll in one polling booth because of non-construction of roads, non-

supply of drinking water, etc. About 700 villagers bycotted the polls because of the shifting of the polling booth (*The Indian Express*, Bhubaneshwar, February 24, 1998).

8. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 19, 1998.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *Ibid*.
11. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 28, 1998.
12. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 24, 1998, March 1 and 2, 1998.
13. On this point, see Stanley Rosen, 'Man's Hope', *Social Research* Vol. 48, No. 3, 1981.
14. *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), December 7, 1997.
15. *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), December 22, 1997.
16. It had a reference to the statement of Pramod Mahajan, a general secretary of the BJP, to the effect that his party 'would consider having electoral adjustment, if the state Dal broke away from the parent party and floated a regional outfit.' (*The Indian Express* Bhubaneshwar, December 8, 1997).
17. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 8, 1997.
18. *Ibid*.
19. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 11, 1997.
20. *Ibid*.
21. *Ibid*.
22. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 14, 1997.
23. *Ibid*.
24. *Ibid*.
25. *Ibid*.
26. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 15, 1997.
27. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 14, 1997.
28. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 16, 1997.
29. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 19, 1997.
30. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 20, 1997.
31. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 18, 1997.
32. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 23, 1998.
33. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 26, 1998.
34. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 29, 1998.
35. *Ibid*.
36. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 6, 1998.
37. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 11, 1998.
38. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 9, 1998.
39. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 14, 1998.
40. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 3, 1998.
41. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 28, 1998.
42. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 27, 1997.
43. *Ibid*.
44. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 10, 1998.
45. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 18, 1998.
46. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 21, 1998. The BJP got Deogarh, Mayurbhanj (ST), Sundargarh (SC), Kalahandi, Nowrangpur (ST), Berhampur, Keonjhar (ST), Balasore, and Balangir. The BJD was given Aska, Phulbani (SC), Koraput (ST), Puri, Bhubaneshwar, Cuttack, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Sambalpur, Bhadrak (SC), Dhenkanal, and Jagatsinghpur.

47. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 8, 1997.
48. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 25, 1998.
49. An interesting episode in this connection is that the BJD did not do anything to persuade another senior leader, Prasanna Acharya, to contest from this seat. However, it could not find any suitable candidate to contest from Sambalpur. It, therefore, requested the BJP to lend one of its leaders to contest from this seat. The BJP, however, turned this request down arguing that a major party like the BJP could not 'depute' one of its leaders to fight for the BJD as is done in a government department. It suggested that the BJD should better leave the seat to the BJP if the BJD was unable to find a suitable candidate. The BJD faced a dilemma in that its activists from northwestern Orissa favored leaving the seat to the BJP whereas another influential section of the party pressed for roping in the president of the Orissa Samata Party for fighting from this seat (*The Indian Express*, Bhubaneshwar, February 1, 1998).
50. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 22, 1998.
51. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 25, 1998.
52. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 31, 1998.
53. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 5, 1998.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 15, 1998.
56. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 11, 1998.
57. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 8, 1997.
58. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 22, 1998.
59. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 23, 1998.
60. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 21, 1998.
61. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 25, 1998.
62. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 4, 1998.
63. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 27, 1998.
64. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 19, 1998.
65. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), December 31, 1997.
66. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 20, 1998.
67. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), February 1, 1998.
68. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 21, 1998.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *The Indian Express* (Bhubaneshwar), January 24, 1998.

10

Conflicting Ambitions in Goa's Parliamentary Elections

Arthur G. Rubinoff[1]

The 1998 election in Goa were the third act in an an unfinished drama which featured politicians settling scores that began with the 1994 assembly and 1996 parliamentary contests. In 1996, five-term incumbent Eduardo Faleiro was defeated in his South Goa district (Mormugao) and the Congress also lost the North Goa (Panaji) constituency. The victor in the North was the leader of the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), Ramakant Khalap, who had lost his seat in the 1994 Goa assembly elections, while MLA Churchill Alemao captured the South seat. Alemao had formed the United Goans Democratic Party (UGDP) after being denied renomination by the Congress for his assembly seat. Alemao and Khalap cooperated in the 1996 campaign, but had a falling out after the election when Prime Minister Deve Gowda named Khalap minister of state for law, justice and company affairs. Alemao had hoped to be designated sports minister in the United Front government, but Goa is too small a state to have two Cabinet positions. Alemao's resentment led him to field a candidate to oppose Khalap in the 1998 election. Khalap and Alemao each finished third, while the Congress won both of Goa's seats—even though its share of the total statewide vote declined significantly. The elections demonstrated the potential of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which

finished a close second in both races, to make major gains in south India. That party, which has very little history in Goa, barely lost the Panaji seat and also finished second in Marmugao. It appears to have displaced the MGP as the preferred party of the state's Hindu voters.

The Communal Pattern of Goan Politics

India's 12th parliamentary election were Goa's 9th, since India's smallest and newest state belatedly entered the union after its military incorporation in December 1961.[2] As a result of 450 years of Portuguese colonialism, there was a lack of roots for democratic institutions and the Congress Party in the tiny (105 km long and 60 km wide) region. Goa is situated between the Arabian Sea and the mountainous Ghats, 250 miles south-southeast of Bombay. Unlike the situation in British India, where Congress politicians gained valuable legislative experience in the period 1937–39, the establishment of meaningful politics in Goa came only after its liberation. For two decades, the Congress, because of its lack of historical roots in Goa, was repeatedly unable to achieve electoral success in a communal setting. Its ideology of secularism clashed with existing primordial loyalties which were exacerbated by the impact of democratic politics and modernization in a post-colonial setting.[3]

Although the party was without historical roots in Goa, the predominantly Brahmin Hindu Congress still expected to capitalize on post-liberation sentiment as it had done throughout British India. Confident that it would sweep the polls in the territory's 1st general election, as had been the case everywhere else in India, the Congress Party was slow to organize for the 1963 General Election. In the meantime, advocates of merger with neighboring Maharashtra founded the MGP, which championed the Marathi language and promoted the cause of non-Brahmin Hindus. In reaction, the primarily Konkani-speaking Christian minority, then 36.8 percent of the population, which had dominated the colony under the Portuguese, founded the United Goans Party (UGP) to prevent the dilution of their community's distinctive culture and language. Drawing its strength from the predominantly Hindu New Conquest regions which had become Portuguese in the mid-eighteenth century, the MGP and its allies garnered over 40 percent of the popular vote, won 16 assembly seats, and captured both parliamentary constituencies. The UGP, whose support was concentrated in the Old Conquest coastal *talukas* (administrative districts), secured just

under 30 percent of the popular vote and picked up 12 assembly seats. An independent was returned from Diu in Gujarat, while the only Congress candidate who secured election to the territorial legislature came from remote Daman, also in Gujarat. Although it fielded 29 candidates, the Congress Party received less than 17 percent of the vote. The results of the 1963 Goa election[4] were described 'as the most serious electoral debacle' the Congress Party had suffered up to that point.[5] The communal nature of the results particularly 'pained' Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.[6] However, until the question of merger was resolved, there could be no place in Goa for a national political party that stressed economic issues and relied on appearances by central Cabinet ministers as a substitute for mass appeal.

The 1963 election established the communal pattern of politics in Goa for the next decade. Since it regarded its victory as an endorsement of merger with Maharashtra, the MGP carried out a series of measures designed to promote that end. The administration of Chief Minister Dayand Bandodkar promoted Marathi as the language of government and education, while denigrating Konkani. It passed a resolution in the Goa Assembly demanding the merger of Goa with Maharashtra, and Daman and Diu with Gujarat, and enacted tenancy legislation which gave property to those who worked the land at the expense of those Goans—mainly Christians—who lived abroad or worked in Bombay, but maintained land in the territory. Most offensively, the government inundated the bureaucracy with 1,100 deputized civil servants from Maharashtra at a time when qualified Goans were available to fill the positions.

The tactics of the MGP provoked intense resistance in the form of opposition walkouts from the assembly and extra-parliamentary agitations, and succeeded in uniting the Catholic and Hindu Brahmin communities that were opposed to the merger. As a way out of a dilemma in which Congress-dominated legislatures in Maharashtra unanimously supported the merger and Mysore endorsed the status quo, the Congress parliamentary board recommended that the Government of India conduct an opinion poll—the only plebiscite in the country's history—to ascertain whether the people of Goa, Daman, and Diu wanted to retain union territory status or be merged with a neighboring state. The contest that transpired during the one month interval between the imposition of central administration and the January 17, 1967 opinion poll witnessed the most unprecedented and intense political activity in Goa's history.[7] The activity elicited a turnout of nearly 82 percent of the

voters. With their identity at stake, Goans rejected merger by a vote of 172,191 to 138,170. The fact that 60,000 more Hindus than Catholics voted, indicates that there was a significant crossover of non-Christians in all parts of the territory.[8]

Although the alliance between the Christians and Hindu Brahmins succeeded in blocking the attempted merger with Maharashtra in January 1967, the two communities were unable to form a coalition that could gain control of the territory's political apparatus in the ensuing March assembly election. When seat adjustments between the Congress and the UGP failed to materialize, the Bandodkar government returned to power, as the MGP kept its 16–12 margin in the assembly. The MGP retained its 40 percent share of the popular vote, while the UGP, without the competition of the Congress which did not compete, attracted nearly 38 percent.

When the Congress and the UGP came to an agreement to support each other's parliamentary candidates in 1971, the Congress won the North, and the UGP retained the South seat it had captured in 1967. In 1972, the Congress once more fielded a full slate of candidates, while it again won only Daman at a time when Mrs Indira Gandhi's supporters were sweeping the rest of the country. Despite several personal appearances by Prime Minister Gandhi in Goa, the effect of her efforts was to produce an 18–10 MGP margin over the UGP. The Congress won less than 14 percent of the popular vote, compared to nearly 38 percent for the MGP and 32 for the UGP.[9]

Before the Congress could play an effective role in Goa, the communal pattern of politics had to be broken and the territorial party unit had to be legitimated by local talent. This occurred during the period of Mrs Gandhi's imposition of Emergency in the mid-1970s when the mainly Catholic UGP members joined non-Brahmin Hindu defectors like Pratapsingh Rane from the MGP, who were disenchanted with Bandodkar's daughter and successor Shasikala Kakodkar, and entered the Congress. The MGP government only survived the 1977 election because the intervention of the Janata Party split the opposition vote. The Janata won three seats, the Congress captured 10 and the MGP, with 15 seats, needed the support of independents to continue governing. Not subject to inroads of the Janata which had become unpopular in governing the center, the Congress, affiliated with Karnataka Chief Minister Devraj Urs, won a victory of landslide proportions in Goa, capturing 19 of the 30 assembly seats and outpolling the MGP for the first time. However, the Congress party, which emerged triumphant in

Goa's 1980 election, may be seen more as a holding company of the opposition than as an extension of a national organization. The results, as *The Times of India* pointed out,[10] marked the initial instance that Goa had voted for a national party—but in supporting the Congress-U which did poorly everywhere else, the former Portuguese colonies had reasserted their insularity. No Congress-I candidate was successful in Goa, despite the trend elsewhere in India.

Shortly after the election, Eduardo Faleiro, the Congress (U) MP for South Goa, crossed the floor of the Lok Sabha and joined the Indira group. At about the same time, local units of the two territorial parties were amalgamated under Mrs Gandhi's banner. Factional rivalry within the Congress and support from New Delhi enabled Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane to remain in office for a decade. It was during his administration, in May 1987, that statehood was achieved.[11] However, the attainment of that status did not bring political stability to the former Portuguese colony.

Prelude to the 1998 Election

A discussion of the state's 1994 assembly and 1996 parliamentary elections is necessary to understand what transpired in Goa's 1998 poll. After the 10-year Congress government of Pratapsingh Rane was overthrown in 1990, Goan politics was in a state of hiatus. Whereas between 1963 and 1989 Goa had only three chief ministers, in the following year it had four different men occupy that office. Rane was followed in March 1990 by Churchill Alemao, who was sworn in as interim chief minister until Speaker Luis Proto Barbosa could replace him on April 14. Alemao had been arrested for smuggling on May 16, 1991 and his brother Alvernanz was killed in an encounter with customs agents.[12] Barbosa, whose administration was tainted by charges of corruption, was disqualified from membership in the state assembly for violating the anti-defection statute in December 1990. He was followed as chief minister on January 25, 1991 by MGP's Ravi Naik. Although disqualified by the speaker under the anti-defection law, Naik was able to govern with Congress support when party leader Dr Wilfred de Souza was named deputy chief minister. De Souza became chief minister in May 1993 when the high court upheld Naik's disqualification. Hence, within a single legislative term, India's newest and smallest state had changed governments four times and chief ministers seven times.[13]

These maneuvers rewarded defectors and increased the cost of government, while undermining the public's faith in the political system.[14] Various expansions of the Cabinet raised its membership to 14, one for every 50,000 voters. Indignation at the machinations of the state's legislators was registered in the 1994 election when voter turnout increased from 68.7 percent in 1989 to 70 percent in 1994.[15] The 1994 election failed to produce a majority in the 40-member state legislature, as the Congress garnered 18 seats, the MGP 12 and its alliance partner, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) carried four constituencies. Significantly, in 1994, the voters rejected 18 sitting MLAs, as they punished defectors who had formed the Ravi Naik government. Among the casualties was the highly regarded, long-time MGP leader Ramakant Khalap, whose reputation had been tainted by his association with the coalition government in which he served as deputy chief minister. In their housecleaning, the electorate also vanquished potential chief minister Francisco Sardinha as well as numerous other former Congress ministers.

The BJP–MGP alliance's 32.1 percent of the vote represented a decline of 7.6 percent from 1989. Congress' share of the vote also declined 3.23 percent from its previous level to 37.5 percent. Part of the fall in the Congress total was attributable to a split in the Catholic vote. After the Congress failed to give Churchill Alemao a berth after readmitting all other defectors, he ran his own ticket under the UGDP banner. Ironically, Eduardo Faleiro strongly supported giving the Congress endorsement to Alemao in Benaulim in order to protect his own position in South Goa,[16] while the Rane faction of the party was adamantly opposed to the reinstatement of an indicted criminal facing a fine of Rs 10 million.[17] Rane was supported by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who had initiated his party's November 1994 state election campaign in Goa and intervened in the allocation of Congress tickets. His interference caused a number of potential nominees to run as independents and provoked a backlash against the high command politics of national parties which bred sycophancy instead of producing effective leaders at the local level. As a result, independents polled 22.1 percent of the vote and won three seats. Their competition and the UGDP slate divided the Congress vote, and the party was unable to carry the state's four largest cities. The UGDP, which captured 8.3 percent of the vote, seriously eroded Congress support in the southern taluka of Salcette, as Alemao and two associates were elected to the assembly. It was reported that Dr Wilfred de Souza was using the UGDP to defeat potential rivals for the chief ministership, like

Francisco Sardinha, in their own constituencies.[18] While De Souza succeeded in accomplishing that objective, many of his own supporters were consumed in the crossfire, and those Congressmen who survived were not disposed to selecting him as chief minister.

As a consequence, Pratapsingh Rane, with the support of three independents and four MGP defectors, was able in 1994 to regain the office he had held for more than a decade and form a Congress-led government. After 15 months, Rane engineered a further defection from the three-member UGDP group—an act that was to have repercussions for the 1996 parliamentary elections. He lured Antonio Gaonkar, the man who had defeated Francisco Sardinha in Curtorim, into the Congress.

The Politics of Revenge: The 1996 Parliamentary Election

Politics in Goa has become the settling of scores. Dr Wilfred de Souza was not satisfied with the position of deputy chief minister, which he regarded as a demotion. He blamed the two sitting Congress MPs for insisting that prior to the 1996 campaign a member of the majority community be chosen as chief minister in a state where Hindus have increased to 67 percent of Goa's population and Christians have declined to about 26 percent.[19] As a result, De Souza virtually sat out that contest, speaking only once for the ticket during the campaign.[20] He attributed the Congress' defeat in the parliamentary election to a drop in the turnout by Catholic voters who refused to exercise their franchise in protest of the shabby way the party had treated him after the 1994 assembly election[21]—a theory the *Herald*, whose readership is primarily Christian, dismissed as 'fanciful'[22] since turnout increased substantially from 43 percent in 1991 to 56.5 percent in 1996.

By denying the incumbent Harish Zantye renomination at the last moment for the traditional MGP North seat, the Congress also guaranteed the sitting member's enmity. His designated successor, Amrut Kansar, a former MGP MP who had been elected only once in 1977, was a weak candidate who had little chance against the well-known Ramakant Khalap in the traditional MGP stronghold which had only returned Congressmen in 1971, 1984, and 1991. Its voters appeared eager to reverse the defeat they had inflicted upon the MGP leader in the 1994 assembly election. Consequently, Khalap was sent to Delhi by a margin of 10,545 votes.

Alemao secured his revenge against the Congress by opposing his former mentor Eduardo Faleiro, whom he had served as an election agent, for the South (Marmugao) seat. After initially backing Francisco Sardinha, Alemao declared his candidacy for the post on March 10, 1996. At first the notion of a man indicted on criminal charges contesting the highly regarded five-term incumbent who was minister of state for chemicals and fertilizers, as well as science and technology, evoked ridicule. While Faleiro was described as Goa's 'best known political figure',[23] the state's leading newspaper called Alemao, 'the most hated man in Salcette'.[24] Not surprisingly, Faleiro attempted to brand his challenger as uneducated, unqualified, and tainted by corruption. Faleiro's record and conscientious use of his MP's Rs 10 million allotment for development in his South Goa constituency appeared to make him invulnerable.

While Alemao's campaign was originally dismissed as having only a nuisance quality[25] against a politician of stature, he succeeded in depicting the aloof and urbane Faleiro as being a Delhi elitist who was out of touch with the the problems of the state's downtrodden. Alemao's campaign, which employed rock bands at his rallies, was in sharp contrast to Faleiro's lackluster speeches that emphasized experience at a time when incumbency was a liability.[26] Appeals to 'vote for the candidate who has brought honor and glory to Goa'[27] did not resonate among the electorate at a time when unemployment was their principal concern.[28]

As much as anything, Faleiro's effort was sabotaged by Goan Congress politicians, who, as in 1994, engaged in 'fratricidal warfare' that undermined their candidates' campaigns in both of Goa's districts. According to the *Herald*, Congress MLAs acted like 'many Brutuses'[29] and made appearances at opponents' rallies in the northern as well as southern parliamentary districts. Sardinha, upset that his arch-enemy Gaonkar had been invited into the Congress, was accused of 'going through the motions for Faleiro'.[30] Other Congressmen, including members of the Cabinet, worked overtly against their party's candidates.

Alemao's campaign especially resonated with underemployed young voters who became an important vote bank. Because of his sponsorship of sporting activities, he was well known to the 14,000 new voters aged 18 to 22 who were added to the electoral rolls that had expanded from 409,000 to 481,621 in five years. In the entire state, the electorate expanded by 100,000 voters from 768,000 to 868,000 during that time. The 72,621 voters who had been added to the electoral rolls since 1991 in South Goa—mostly Hindus from outside the state—had no

attachment to Eduardo Faleiro. Even though Alemao cleverly emphasized preserving Goan identity and used the 'Two Leaves' anti-merger with Maharashtra campaign symbol from the 1967 Opinion Poll, he was also careful to court non-Christian Hindu voters.[31] Alemao's appeal to that community would be reflected in his impressive showing in Hindu majority assembly districts like Ponda. Instead of Alemao's alleged criminal ties to the Bombay–Dubai mafia being a liability, his 'don image' became an asset. It was suggested that Alemao's shady connections and generous personal spending would enable him to get things done for Goa. An OBC, he also played the caste card against his Brahmin opponent, and in the process, appealed to many low caste Hindu voters, whom the incumbent ignored.

Faleiro's predicament was aggravated by the national tide against the Congress during the last week of the campaign and his opponent's promise to support a United Front government. Not even a widely circulated 'public call to right thinking citizens' signed by a cross section of Goa's establishment[32] just prior to the May 2, 1996 poll could save the incumbent. As a result of emphasizing his caste, class, generational, and regional differences with his opponent, Alemao swamped Faleiro by over 25,000 votes—more than double the margin the popular Ramakant Khalap ran up against a weak candidate in the North.[33] Moreover, his 109,346 total votes exceeded by 8,893 the previous record of 100,453 ballots Faleiro polled in 1984.

The extent of Eduardo Faleiro's defeat was pervasive.[34] His opponent won votes from not merely MGP and BJP supporters, but also traditional backers of the Congress. Faleiro's vote fell dramatically in every assembly district. The UGDP candidate secured 40.52 percent of the vote, while Faleiro managed only 31.16 percent—a drop of more than 26 percentage points. In his heavily Catholic home *taluka* of Salcette, Faleiro's vote fell by 37.75 percent, leading one analyst to conclude that the Congress' sole remaining base in Goa is in areas where Christians are a decisive minority.[35]

The double-barreled defeat in Goa, which left the state devoid of Congress representation in the Lok Sabha for the first time since 1971, and the Congress' debacle throughout the country placed the Rane government in jeopardy. There was speculation that Rane would be toppled as chief minister, which had happened in 1990 after Rajiv Gandhi lost power.[36] However, because of the way his rivals behaved during the campaign, it was difficult to pin the blame for the party's

debacle on the chief minister. In any event, the unstable situation in Delhi prevented Rane's immediate removal.

The 1994 assembly and the 1996 parliamentary elections in Goa revealed that all parties contain factions that are more interested in defeating intraparty rivals than the formal opposition. Just as they had cooperated in removing Rane in 1990, De Souza, Alemao, and Khalap worked together in those contests.[37] By remaining in the Congress, which he had left for a time to form his own regional party in 1984, De Souza was the linchpin of the triumvirate which one newspaper dubbed the 'Churchill–Khalap–Willy Axis'.[38] Double-dealing, however, was not restricted to the Congress. Sensing it was losing its Hindu base to the BJP, the MGP was unwilling to renew its 1994 alliance with the national party in 1996. Nevertheless, some BJP supporters worked against their own nominees on behalf of regional party candidates to defeat Congress candidates in Goa, because they wanted to deny it power in Delhi.[39] As a result, the BJP obtained only 11.25 percent of the South Goa vote compared to the 13.6 percent it had won in 1991. To no one's surprise, the BJP was unwilling to continue its association with the MGP and the UGDP after the election. There was especially close cooperation during the 1996 parliamentary election between the MGP, which was strong in the mainly Hindu North, and the UGDP, whose base was in the largely Christian areas of the southern district. MGP voters who defected to Alemao caused Dr Kashinath Jalmi, the party's candidate in South Goa and its leader in the assembly, to forfeit his deposit. As a result of the collapse of its support, the MGP's share of the vote declined from 20.8 percent to only 11.25 percent.

What happened in Goa in the 1996 election reflected the national pattern: voters protested Congress misrule, corruption, and indifference. However, in India's smallest state as elsewhere in south India, they did not turn towards the BJP, but instead turned to regional parties. Speculation that MGP–UGDP cooperation would lead to a new regional party[40] that would be more responsive to the Goans than either the national BJP or Congress was, ironically, stifled by developments in Delhi. As Goa is too small a state to have both of its MPs included in the council of ministers, the ambitions of Khalap and Alemao collided. Khalap's fortunes in the national capital were promoted by Maharashtra Congress leader Sharad Pawar, who was anxious that no opposition politician from his own state achieve a position of prominence in the United Front government. When Prime Minister Deve Gowda named Ramakant Khalap as minister for state for law, justice and company

affairs, the appointment earned the resentment of Churchill Alemao who had hoped to be designated sports minister in the United Front government.[41]

Collision of Ambitions: The 1998 Parliamentary Election

The antipathy between Alemao and Khalap, as well as the multiplicity of intraparty disputes, carried over into the 1998 campaign which, because of the tenuousness of the United Front government, was merely an extension of the 1996 contest. As had been the case in the previous two elections, Goa's politicians were eager to settle accounts. Khalap, who had supported Alemao instead of the MGP nominee in South Goa, was a particular target of dissidents. The defeated MGP candidate in Marmugao constituency, Dr Kashinath Jalmi, sponsored a candidate who opposed Surendra Sirsat, Khalap's choice for reelection as party president.[42] While the challenge was unsuccessful, it indicated that Khalap, by associating with Alemao, had antognized the Jalmi–Kakodkar wing of the party.

Alemao's strategy to become a minister was to defeat Ramakant Khalap in his home constituency. To this end, he even considered running against his rival for the North seat.[43] Alemao eventually designated Babuso Gaonkar, a former MLA who had incarnations in both the MGP and the Congress, to be his UGDP stand-in. Overconfident because of the magnitude of his victory over Eduardo Faleiro, Alemao expressed optimism that the UGDP could take both the parliamentary seats and win the next assembly election.[44] He further predicted that he would win by 'a margin of 40,000 votes [and] be first in all 21 assembly constituencies'.[45] Alemao was so certain of victory that he neglected his constituency in the campaign and overextended his resources by trying to defeat Khalap in the North.

The Congress, whose campaign was directed by Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane, was determined to recapture the seats it had lost in 1996. Eduardo Faleiro was removed from the fray with the promise of an appointment to the Rajya Sabha when the term of John Fernandes expired in July 1999,[46] a commitment that engendered the incumbent's wrath and alienated the Congress Youth organization which he had once headed. The Congress fielded former chief minister Ravi Naik for the Panaji seat and former 14-year Cabinet minister Francisco Sardinha

for the Marmugao constituency. In ticketing two heavyweights who had been defeated in the last assembly election for parliament, Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane hoped to remove two potential rivals from state politics. However, other Congress aspirants for the chief ministership could better ensure Naik's and Sardinha's elimination by working against their election. It was well known that Dr Wilfred de Souza harbored a grudge against Ravi Naik, who had worked to remove him as chief minister. As a result, the Congress campaign was once again marked by infighting.[47]

Although there was renewed speculation about an MGP–BJP alliance, the national party's price for an agreement was that Ramakant Khalap sever ties with the United Front and declare his loyalty to the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee.[48] When the North Goa MP failed to do so, the BJP mounted an all-out effort to unseat him. Its candidate was Pandurang Raut, a former tourism minister who had been in both MGP and Congress governments. In response, the MGP marshaled all of its resources in the North, virtually writing off Padmanabh Amonkar's candidacy in the South—a constituency the party had carried only in 1963. The BJP's standard bearer in Marmugao was Ramakant Angle, chairman of the Madgaum Urban Cooperative Bank, who had previously been in the Congress and the UGDP. The South, therefore, promised to be a triangular contest, while the North was a four-cornered race.

The constellation aligned against Khalap was thus formidable. Naik was a champion of the Bhandari caste, one of the most significant communities in the constituency. Raut hailed from Bicholim, which had provided the MGP candidate with a 7,000 vote majority in 1996. Gaonkar, as a representative of the numerically important Gowda community, was more than just Churchill Alemao's surrogate. The former member of the state legislature came from an MGP stronghold in the far northern section of the district whose votes were vital to Khalap. Since the UGDP had supported Khalap in the previous election instead of fielding its own candidate, any support it drew in 1998 was bound to be at the incumbent's expense.

Both Khalap and Alemao, who had the benefits of anti-incumbency in 1996, now found holding office in New Delhi to be a liability. Each MP remained on the defensive throughout the campaign. Khalap learned that there was no advantage in being a Cabinet minister in an unsuccessful government. Therefore, he failed to benefit from an appearance in Panaji by Prime Minister I.K. Gujral shortly before the

conclusion of the campaign. The North Goa MP was berated for ignoring the concerns of his constituents while in Delhi. Moreover, Khalap was branded a 'fat cat' when the Mapusa Urban Cooperative which he headed became the Bank of Goa. He also failed to respond to allegations about his involvement in questionable real estate transactions in Arpora. Alemao, who had convinced the South's voters that they should defeat Faleiro in 1996, had difficulty finding reasons why they should reelect him.

However, the incumbents' Congress challengers also had serious liabilities. Neither could articulate a vision of the future (Sardinha banally claimed he was 'willing to die for Goa') and both were burdened by their past. Naik had been linked to developers who had engaged in dubious practices when he was chief minister, and Sardinha had been implicated in altering a niece's grades as education minister. The fact that most of the candidates had changed parties as often as commuters changed trains also undermined their credibility. The specter of so many retreaded politicians tainted by corruption flaying one another for the same offenses was Orwellian.

While the candidates of the MGP and UGDP emphasized the supposed responsive nature of their regional character, the nominees of the two national parties stressed the relationship between political stability and economic development. The BJP's slogan was 'vote for a stable government and an able prime minister'. The Congress relied on an appearance by Mrs Sonia Gandhi on January 17, 1998 to counter the widespread appeal of A.B. Vajpayee as a potential incorruptible and capable leader. In her address to between 4,000 and 5,000 people in Panaji, Mrs Gandhi depicted the election as 'a contest between the secular forces of harmony and fundamentalism'. However, the opportunity to unite the party became an occasion for rancor, as it was noted that many dignitaries were excluded from the public meeting.[49]

While the Congress relied upon *darshan*, the BJP, while the beneficiary of a late appearance by Vajpayee, concentrated on attracting disaffected MGP activists. Moreover, it conducted an intense campaign. The BJP mailed 70,000 letters to residents, telephoned 10,000, and had 800 canvassers. It used the 1998 parliamentary campaign as a means not only to help elect a majority in New Delhi, but to build an organization that would be in place for the 1999 assembly election.

As a result of the intensive multiparty campaign, turnout for the February 28, 1998 poll increased from 56 percent in 1996 to 61 percent. In contrast to the situation two years earlier, the voters' lists were stable.

Voter strength had risen only from 868,138 to 879,307 in the interval between elections. Eligible voters increased by 7,968 to 394,483 in North Goa, and by only 3,201 to 484,824 in the South. Turnout in the Marmugao constituency was over 61 percent, while the quadrangular contest in the North elicited a response from nearly 62 percent of the voters. Interestingly, while turnout was heaviest in traditional MGP assembly constituencies, increased polling did not translate into more MGP votes. The long-time ruling party's vote share fell by 13 percent. In the South it dropped to a a negligible 3 percent (see Tables 10.2 and 10.4). Significantly, the sharpest swing was in the Priol constituency of the MGP candidate for parliament in 1996 who had been undermined by Khalap's support of Alemao. The UGDP standard-bearer obtained 18 percent of the votes in the North district, where only 23 percent of the voters are Christian. Alemao's surrogate succeeded in his objective of denying reelection to Ramakant Khalap, whose vote total fell by over 30,000 in two years (see Tables 10.1 and 10.3). However, the South Goa MP did so at the expense of his own reelection. His own vote total in the South fell by over 20,000 votes or 10 percent, and like Khalap he finished third (see Tables 10.3 and 10.4). (see also Map 10.1.)

In addition to the third place finish of both incumbents of the two regional parties, the other major story in the 1998 elections in Goa was the impressive performance of the BJP in a state that has a large percentage of minority voters. It is believed that the BJP captured 15 percent of

Table 10.1: North Goa Results by Candidate*

Candidate	*Party*	*Vote Totals*	
		1998	*1996*
Ramakant Khalap	MGP	61538 (25.5%)	92334 (43.4%)
Ravi Naik	INC	68224 (28.3%)	81785 (38.4%)
Pandurang Raut	BJP	67807 (28.1%)	36022 (16.9%)
Babuso Gaonkar	MGP	43719 (18.1%)	No Candidate
Others		Nil	2614 (1.2%)
Total		241288 (100%)	212755 (100%)

* Figures provided by the Panaji Office of the Election Commission of India.

Table 10.2: South Goa Results by Candidate*

Candidate	*Party*	*Vote Totals*	
		1998	*1996*
Churchill Alemao	UGDP	88839 (30.5%)	109343 (40.2%)
Francisco Sardinha	INC	100090 (34.3%)	84054 (30.8%)
Padmanabh Amonkar	MGP	8653 (3.0%)	36418 (13.4%)
Ramakant Angle	BJP	92240 (31.6%)	30357 (11.2%)
Others		1656 (0.6%)	11989 (4.4%)
Total		291478 (100%)	272161 (100%)

* Figures provided by the Panaji Office of the Election Commission of India.

Table 10.3: North Goa Results by Assembly District*

Constituency	*INC*	*%*	*BJP*	*%*	*MGP*	*%*	*UGDP*	*%*	*Valid Votes*
Mandrem	3468	27.0	2409	18.8	5280	41.2	1648	12.9	12805
Pernem	3432	29.9	2215	19.3	4600	40.0	1231	10.7	11478
Dargalim	2536	26.6	2441	25.6	4096	43.0	447	4.7	9520
Tivim	5084	33.8	3675	24.3	3346	22.2	2957	19.6	15062
Mapsua	4334	30.1	3739	26.1	3895	27.2	2337	16.3	14305
Siolim	4537	31.0	3685	25.2	2994	20.5	3412	23.3	14628
Calangute	5015	37.0	1696	12.5	3518	25.9	3339	24.6	13568
Saligao	2649	22.8	2254	19.4	3195	27.5	3501	30.2	11599
Aldona	4367	27.9	4908	31.3	2970	18.9	3432	21.9	15677
Panaji	2496	27.6	3885	43.0	1477	16.3	1181	13.1	9039
Taleigao	4953	37.8	3314	25.3	1577	12.0	3254	24.8	13098
St. Cruz	4310	31.6	3260	23.9	1706	12.5	4379	32.1	13655
St. Andre	2505	21.9	2531	22.1	2000	17.5	4413	38.5	11449
Cumbarjua	3631	26.3	3184	23.1	4148	30.1	2838	20.5	13801
Bicholim	2484	18.0	7320	53.0	3261	23.6	743	5.4	13808
Maem	2814	25.2	3376	30.2	3823	34.2	1160	10.4	11173
Pali	2815	19.9	6283	44.3	3795	26.8	1292	9.1	14185
Poriem	4270	33.7	4113	32.5	2909	23.0	1361	10.8	12653
Valpoi	2519	25.9	3511	36.2	2946	30.3	791	8.1	9709
Total	68224	28.3	67807	28.1	61538	25.5	43719	18.1	241288

* Results provided by the Returning Officer for the Panaji Parliamentary Constituency.

Table 10.4: South Goa Results by Assembly District*

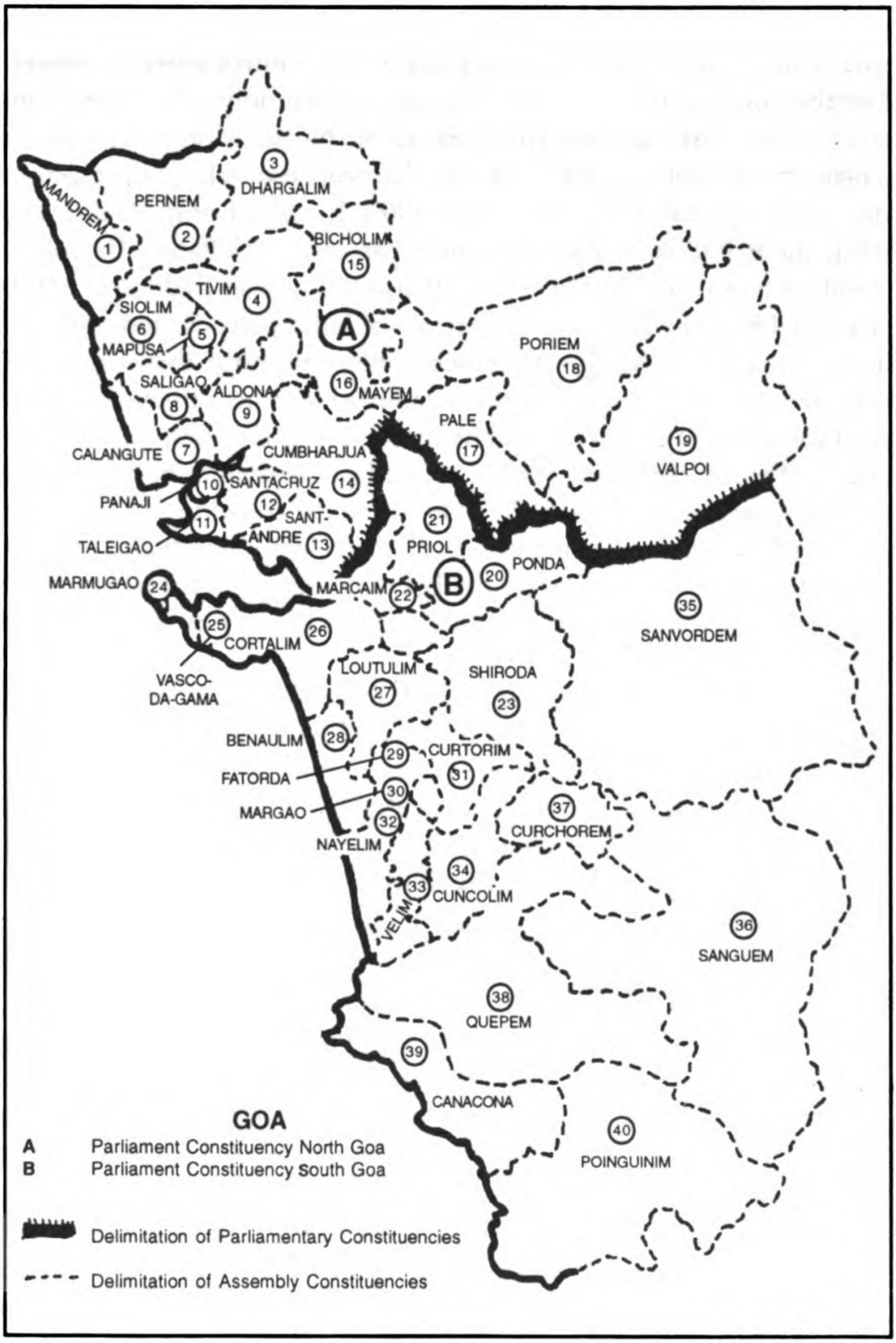
Constituency	*INC*	*%*	*BJP*	*%*	*MGP*	*%*	*UGDP*	*%*	*Valid Votes*
Ponda	3917	24.3	8918	55.3	767	4.8	2444	15.1	16136
Priol	2184	14.2	8149	53.0	1613	10.5	3321	21.6	15362
Marcaim	4026	29.5	6908	50.6	778	5.7	1878	13.7	13660
Shiroda	4962	34.1	5753	39.6	478	3.3	3252	22.4	14532
Marmugao	4660	29.4	5952	37.6	866	5.5	4301	27.2	15839
Vasco	4693	28.3	5719	34.4	682	4.1	5470	32.9	16611
Cortalim	8007	47.4	2484	14.7	183	1.1	6140	36.4	16882
Loutolim	4886	40.6	795	6.6	46	0.4	6238	51.2	12020
Benaulim	4563	36.0	632	5.0	27	0.2	7411	58.5	12673
Fatora	5439	36.0	5420	35.9	145	1 .	4045	26.7	15106
Margao	4399	34.7	5508	43.5	106	1 .	2596	20.5	12665
Curtorim	8428	59.0	835	5.9	48	0.3	4878	34.2	14271
Navelim	8901	51.1	2411	13.9	71	0.4	5860	33.8	17344
Velim	4803	43.0	849	7.6	65	0.6	5383	48.2	11157
Cuncolim	4422	35.0	2267	18.0	218	1.7	5640	44.7	12618
Sanvordem	4213	30.2	5823	41.8	674	4.8	3313	23.8	13932
Sanguem	2945	25.5	5596	48.5	269	2.3	2626	22.8	11541
Churchorem	5037	33.9	5750	38.7	211	1 .	3778	25.4	14853
Quepem	3935	26.4	4751	31.9	847	5.7	5183	3483	14887
Canacona	3404	32.7	4310	40.7	196	1.9	2596	24.5	10578
Poinguinim	2262	25.8	3401	38.7	363	4.1	2680	30.5	8792
Total	100090	34.3	92240	31.6	8653	3.0	88839	30.5	291478

* Figures provided by the Returning Officer, Margao.

Catholic and Muslim voters. After never polling more than 18 percent of the vote since it began contesting elections in 1991, it came within 417 votes of taking the North Goa seat; and even more impressively came within 7,850 votes of winning the South seat in a constituency that is 40 percent Christian. Nevertheless, the Congress was only able to carry the Marmugao seat because of the support of Catholic voters in the Salcette taluka. Nevertheless, the BJP nearly doubled the votes it won from 36,022 to 67,807 in the North, and more than tripled them in the South, increasing from 30,354 to 92,240 in a constituency that is 40 percent Christian. The 1998 election demonstrated that the BJP is likely to become a permanent player in the politics of Goa, as it is in neighboring Karnataka and Maharashtra, rather than a nonplayer as it is in Kerala, which also has a large Christian minority.

While the Congress won both seats, its performance was unimpressive, even though both of its candidates duplicated Ramakant Khalap's

Map 10.1: Constituencies of Goa



Source: Government of Goa, *Lok Sabha Election 1998, Reference Handbook* (Panaji Department of Information and Publicity, 1998)

feat of losing their assembly seats in 1994 only to win elections to parliament. Ravi Naik won the North Goa seat with a mere 68,224 votes, of the total electorate of 394,483, while Francisco Sardinha managed to garner only slightly more than a third of the South's potential voters. Despite winning the seats, the Congress gained only a 3 percent vote share in the South, and lost 10 percent in the North. Moreover, it lost in a majority of the 40 assembly districts that will be at stake in the election originally scheduled for November 1999. It carried only 10 districts, while the BJP took 17, including the urban centers of Panaji, Bicholim, Ponda, Margao, and Vasco. The BJP also did well in traditional MGP strongholds in the New Conquests, as the latter party carried only five assembly districts. MGP spokesmen could only hope that the results reflected national trends and the assembly elections originally scheduled for November 1999 would be fought on local issues, but the prospects of an anachronistic party dedicated to the merger of Goa with a neighboring state are bleak. Its elderly Hindu constituency has been displaced by younger, better educated voters who, like their counterparts elsewhere in India, prefer the BJP. Because that process is not yet complete, the Congress was able to regain both parliamentary seats with a declining share of the electorate.

The other regional party, the UGDP, took 10 districts, mainly at the expense of the Congress. Cognizant that if the 25 percent the UGDP polled were added to the Congress vote, the party's statewide total would be 57 percent compared with the BJP's 30 percent, Congress leaders—including Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane—reversed their earlier decision and decided to readmit Churchill Alemao before the next assembly elections.[50] Since the UGDP was a personal vehicle of the Alemao brothers, its remnants are unlikely to be an independent factor in the next scheduled assembly contest.

The victories of the Congress were thus bittersweet. Ravi Naik complained that 'some of my partymen worked against me' in his race.[51] Party loyalists noted that the Congress was relegated to third place, behind the UGDP and MGP, in Dr. Wilfred de Souza's home assembly constituency of Saligao (see Table 10.3.)

The Aftermath of an Inconclusive Election

Within weeks of the parliamentary elections, De Souza, under the guise of an anti-corruption campaign formed a so-called Goa Rajiv Congress

Party (GRCP) and staged a predictable coup. He displaced Pratapsingh Rane with the backing of 22 other legislators, including five Congress rebel ministers. Others who joined De Souza included five other Congressmen, four members of the MGP, and four BJP MLAs who rendered support from the outside. The endeavor, at this writing, undergoing a gauntlet of court challenges and disqualifications under anti-defection legislation, has been blessed by the BJP hierarchy in Delhi and its recently appointed governor, J.F.R. Jacob. The BJP sees the defection of 10 of the 25 Congress legislators as opportunity to run against a divided organization in the next state elections.[52] Former industries minister Luizinho Faleiro displaced Rane as the leader of the opposition in the Goa Assembly, and in late November 1998 he became Goa's tenth chief minister in eight years.

Faleiro's ministry proved to be highly unstable, as Deputy Chief Minister Dayanand Narvekar threatened to defect to the Goa Rajiv Congress. In mid-February 1999, President's rule was imposed and called for elections on June 4, 1999. As the BJP and MGP were unable to reach an understanding, the Congress won a majority of 21 seats with only 24.5 percent of the vote; the BJP captured 10 seats with 16.6 percent; while the MGP was reduced to only four seats and 8.9 percent of the popular vote. The Goa Rajiv Congress and the UGDP took two seats each. Despite its absolute majority, Chief Minister Luizinho Faleiro's government remains in jeopardy, as his promised six person Cabinet cannot accommodate disappointed office seekers. As a result, he has induced the two UGDP members to join his government and is considering expanding his Cabinet.

The scenario of Catholic communalists making an unholy alliance with Hindu chauvinists is reminiscent of what transpired when Rane was overthrown in 1990 after the Janata Dal came to power at the center. It is illustrative of the fluidity of Goa's political situation, where, as is the case in New Delhi, no one party can win an outright majority at the polls. The ecumenical experiment engineered by the 71-year-old Wilfred de Souza marked a last hurrah, and could not be expected to last. The inevitable rivalries of Goa's politicians were bound to resurface within a new regional party. In the meantime, the cost of government in the state continues to skyrocket as defectors are rewarded with ministerial posts. While the BJP may obtain short-run dividends by allying with those who split the Congress, by doing so it jeopardizes the gains made on its own in the 1998 elections as well as its reputation for principle. As they proved in 1994, Goa's voters are capable of punishing defectors and their allies.

Goa in the Context of the 1998 Election

Goa's voters followed national trends in supporting national candidates in the 1998 parliamentary election, just as they preferred regional candidates in 1996. Although the state has only two seats in the Lok Sabha, it cannot be ignored in a situation where every contest is vital, because there is no dominant coalition in Delhi. This reality was underscored by the fact that all three national party leaders made appearances during the campaign. Sonia Gandhi helped inaugurate her party's campaign and contributed to its narrow victories, but her efforts did not curb intra-party divisions in the Congress. Nor was I.K. Gujral able to save his law minister, Ramakant Khalap. A.B. Vajpayee's late rally capped a surprisingly successful effort by the Bharatiya Janata Party. The performance of his government will have a direct bearing on the state unit's fortunes.

Notes and References

1. The author acknowledges a grant from the University of Toronto which made fieldwork possible in February 1998.
2. See, Arthur G. Rubinoff, *India's Use of Force in Goa* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1971).
3. I have discussed this in detail in *The Construction of a Political Community: Integration and Identity in Goa* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998).
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5. *The Times of India* (New Delhi), December 13, 1963.
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10. *The Times of India* (Bombay), January 10, 1980, p. 6.
11. See Arthur G. Rubinoff, 'Goa's Attainment of Statehood', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, May 1992, pp. 471–87.
12. *Herald* (Panaji), May 17, 1991, p. 1.
13. 'An Unending Maze', *Goa Today*, March 1994, p. 9.

14. Peter Ronald deSouza, 'The Accountability Factor', *Seminar*, No. 440, April 1996, pp. 36–39.
15. For an analysis of the 1994 assembly elections in Goa see Peter Ronald deSouza, 'A Democratic Verdict?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, Nos.2–3, January 13–20, 1996, pp. 149–52.
16. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), December 19, 1994, p. 6 and December 28, 1994, p. 1.
17. The verdict is under appeal. *Herald* (Panaji), December 8, 1994, p. 1.
18. *Gomantak Times* (Panaji), October 1, 1994, p. 1, and *Navhind Times* (Panaji), December 28, 1994, p. 1.
19. Interview, Panjim, June 12, 1996.
20. In his defense he produced a letter from Chief Minister Pratapsingh Rane dated April 23, 1996 instructing MLAs to 'concentrate...in your [own] constituency'.
21. *Herald* (Panaji), May 4, 1996, p. 1.
22. *Herald* (Panaji), May 17, 1996, p. 4.
23. H.D. Singh, *543 Faces of India: Guide to 543 Parliamentary Constituencies* (New Delhi: Newsman Publishers, 1996), p. 89.
24. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), March 11, 1996.
25. Peter Ronald deSouza, 'Community Factor Matters', *Frontline*, April 19, 1996, pp. 46–47.
26. *Goa Today*, May 1996, pp. 18–26.
27. *Gomantak Times* (Panaji), April 28, 1996, p. 1.
28. *Gomantak Times* (Panaji), April 24, 1996.
29. *Herald* (Panaji), May 10, 1996, p. 4.
30. *Herald* (Panaji), May 1, 1996, p. 4.
31. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), April 17, 1996, p. 3 and April 18, 1996, p. 4.
32. *Gomantak Times* (Panaji), April 30, 1996, p. 1.
33. Peter Ronald deSouza, 'Goa: A Vote Against Misgovernance', *Frontline*, June 14, 1996, pp. 100–101.
34. For details see Arthur G. Rubinoff, 'The Defeat of Eduardo Faleiro', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, September 27, 1997, pp. 2469–72.
35. Peter Ronald de Souza, '1996 Elections: A Protest Against the Congress', *Navhind Times* (Panaji), June 3 and June 12, 1996. Cf. [Parker], 'Congress Base Intact', *Navhind Times* (Panaji), June 10, 1996.
36. M. Madan Mohan, 'Congress (I) Drubbed in Goa', *Frontline*, May 31, 1996, pp. 130–31.
37. Khalap ensured De Souza's reelection to the assembly from Saligao by running a Shiv Sena candidate against him in his constituency in 1994. De Souza attempted to return the favor by opposing him with a weak candidate in Mandrem—a strategy that failed.
38. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), April 13, 1996.
39. On this point see *Navhind Times* (Panaji), April 29, 1996, p. 23 and M. Madan Mohan, 'The Tale of Two MPs', *The Hindu* (Madras), June 10, 1996, p. 17.
40. Made by Peter Ronald deSouza in *Navhind Times* (Panaji), June 2 and 3, 1996.
41. *The Statesman* (New Delhi), July 8, 1996, p. 9.
42. *Goa Today*, October 1997, p. 38.
43. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), December 9, 1997, p. 1.
44. *Herald* (Panaji), January 18, 1998, p. 5.
45. *Goa Today*, February 1998, p. 28.
46. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), December 24, 1997, p. 1.

47. *Herald* (Panaji), December 7, 1997, p. 1.
48. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), January 8, 1997, p. 1.
49. *Navhind Times* (Panaji), January 18, 1998, p. 4.
50. *Free Press Journal* (Mumbai), June 26, 1998; *Deccan Herald* (Internet Edition), June 6, 1998; and *The Indian Express* (Internet Edition), July 25, 1998.
51. *Goa Today*, April 1998, p. 29.
52. *India Abroad*, August 7, 1998.

11

Punjab: Changing Political Agenda

Pramod Kumar

If the mid-twentieth century was a period of the consolidation of nationalism into nation states, the last decade of this century witnessed the assertion of subnational identities. It seems that the bone and flesh of a self-determined nation state is either being substituted by redefined (not organic) subnationalities on the part of the people or by an aggressive state-controlled nation.

These redefined and reformulated subnationality identities have also acquired fundamentalist overtones as happened in Punjab, India. These fundamentalist assertions have reinforced the 'traditional purity of culture' and have perceived the dominant culture as a threat to its existence. The interaction of these fundamentalist assertions and the monocultural nature of the state-controlled nation with the multi-cultural social reality has created conditions for conflict.

The gradual process of de-democratization of politics and flouting of the precious facet of democracy coupled with steady erosion of the vitality of democratic institutions, presented violence as a viable form of grievance redressal mechanism in the 1980s. Terrorism in Punjab resulted in the killing of more than 10,000 people. It fractured the social fabric and blunted the sensibilities of the people.

These developments made democratic institutions and processes, political parties, and moderate leadership irrelevant. Liberal political parties, having lost control over political events, could not articulate and

further their ideological and political programs. The agenda for politics was dictated by hardliners within Sikh politics and the repressive state apparatus.

Much of the politics in the 1980s was nurtured by fundamentalist ideology, ruthless political and administrative acts, and protagonists of brutal and senseless killings. The democratic modes of protest and interest articulation were rendered ineffective. Institutions necessary for the functioning of representative democracy were also undermined.

The revival of democratic processes in the 1990s witnessed active assertion of the people for setting the agenda for elections and exercising their right to vote. A sample survey conducted by the Institute for Development and Communication (IDC) on the eve of the 1997 election clearly indicated that the people had realized the value of democracy. They asserted that democracy, howsoever corrupt, inefficient and ineffective, was better than whimsical fanatical terrorism. It is in this context that about 49 percent of the sampled voters mentioned that even if political parties did not fulfil their promises, they would continue to exercise their right to vote to keep the democratic system functional.[1] This was the lesson of 10 years of violent turmoil in Punjab.

Elections and Revival of the Democratic Process

The 1992 Lok Sabha election was, therefore, a major step towards the revival of normal democratic processes, even though in this election around 24 percent of the people voted and it was labeled 'an apology for a representative character of democratic polity' (see Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Percentage of Votes Polled in the Lok Sabha Elections, 1967–1998

Year	*Percentage of Votes Polled*
1967	71.1
1971	59.9
1977	66.8
1980	62.7
1984	67.6
1989	62.7
1992	24.0
1996	62.0
1998	60.07

Source: Election Commission Reports, India.

This was the lowest turnout since the reorganization of Punjab in 1966. Punjab had the highest turnout of 72 percent in the 1969 mid-term election, which ushered Punjab into the era of coalition politics (see Table 11.2). However, the percentage of votes polled continued to decline gradually since 1969 with 62.67 percent votes polled in the 1989 Lok Sabha election. In the 1992 Lok Sabha election, the decline was unprecedented due to the exceptional political situation. The turnout was the lowest in Jat-dominated rural areas. It was the highest in urban areas.[2]

Table 11.2: Percentage of Votes Polled in Assembly Elections, 1967–1997

Year	*Percentage of Votes Polled*
1967	71.2
1969	72.3
1972	69.3
1977	65.4
1980	64.3
1985	67.5
1992	23.82
1997	79.78

Source: Election Commission Reports, India, 1967–1997.

The response of the rural population was naturally apathetic since they constituted the support base of the boycotting Akali Dal. Thus, in the 1992 election, the turnout in rural areas was the least with 15.1 percent participation, and it increased with the level of urban settlement (see Table 11.3).

Table 11.3: Urban–Rural Turnout

Constituencies	*Assembly Elections*		*Lok Sabha (Assembly Segment-wise)*
	1985	*1992*	*1996*
Urban (12)	57.7	38.3	56.6
Semi-urban (11)	67.8	26.5	64.4
Semi-rural (24)	68.4	25.3	
Rural (70)	68.8	15.1	62.8*

* This figure is calculated for both semi-rural (24) and rural (70) areas.
Source: The Tribune, February 9, 1992.

In terms of electoral politics, the 1997 election experienced record participation of the people in the post-1967 phase. Around 80 percent of the people voted as against 23.69 percent in the 1992 election (see Table 11.2). The main reason for this massive turnout was the people's assertion of their faith in the democratic mode for the redress of their grievances and also due to the return of competitive politics in Punjab after 12 years.

However, the representative character of democracy got a boost with the January 1993 election to grassroots institutions like panchayats and municipalities. The massive participation[3] in these elections was presented as a vote against terrorism, which by implication legitimized Congress rule in the state. Further, the 1997 assembly election marked the beginning of a distinct political trend in Punjab and also offered some lessons to those who believed in the violent mode to bring about social change.

Return of Competitive Politics

Historically, Punjab has experienced electoral competition between the Akali Dals of different shades and the Congress Party.

Competitive politics was seen functioning in the post-terrorism phase only during the direct elections to 40 percent of the seats of the panchayat samitis and zila parishads in September 1994, because the Akali Dal had boycotted the 1992 election.[4] The same competition was witnessed during the three assembly by-elections.

The Congress was forced to give political space to other political parties. Out of the three assembly by-elections in mid-1994, two seats were captured by the Akalis and the ruling Congress could only retain the Nakodar seat. In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the Congress secured 35 percent of the total valid votes polled and won just two seats. This was its worst performance since the 1977 election when it could not win any seat and secured merely 33 percent of the votes (see Table 11.4).

The results of the 1996 Lok Sabha election were significant because this perhaps was the first normal election after 1980, held without fear of the gun. In comparison to the 1980 Lok Sabha election, the Congress Party's performance in the 1996 election was dismal. In the 1980 election, the Congress secured 12 seats with 52 percent of the vote.

Table 11.4: Party-wise Percentage of Votes Polled and Seats Won in Lok Sabha Elections, 1967–1998

Year of Election	*INC*	*JD*	*BJP*	*CPI*	*CPM*	*SAD*
1967						
W/C	9/13	–	1/6 (Jan Sangh)	–	3/9	–
Votes polled (%)	37.12	–	2.56	4.26	1.88	22.49
1971						
W/C	10/13	–	–	2/3	–	1/11
Votes polled (%)	45.00	–	4.45	6.22	2.20	30.85
1977						
W/C	0/13	3/3	0/0	1/4	–	9/9
Votes polled (%)	32.9	12.9	0	6.8	–	43.6
1980						
W/C	12/13	0/9	–	0/2	–	1/7
Votes polled (%)	52.5	10.0	–	3.8	–	23.4
1985						
W/C	6/12	0/12	0/3	0/6	–	7/11
Votes polled (%)	23.8	2.2	3.4	6.8	–	37.2
1989						
W/C	2/13	1/4	0/3	0/4	0/3	0/0
Votes polled (%)	26.5	5.5	4.2	2.1	3.9	–
1992						
W/C	12/13	0/4	0/9	0/1	0/3	1/12
Votes polled (%)	49.3	1.3	16.5	1.6	4.0	19.4
1996						
W/C	2/13	0/1	0/6	–	–	8/9
Votes polled (%)	35.0	2.7	6.4	–	–	29.0
1998						
W/C	0/13	1/1	4/4	–	–	8/9
Votes polled (%)	25.85	–	–	–	–	32.93

W/C = Won/Contested
Source: Election Commission Reports, India, 1967–1998.

However, the 1985, 1989, and 1992 elections were held when peace was still under bargain. In 1985, both the Congress and the Akalis secured almost the same percentage of votes. In this election, the Akalis won seven and the Congress six seats. These elections were held in the background of the Rajiv–Longowal accord signed in 1984.[5] The accord was signed to resolve pending issues like apportionment of river waters and transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab.

However, the elections of 1989 and 1992 were held when the agenda for peace was still being bargained. In the 1989 election, the Akali Dal (M) won a majority of the seats with 39 percent of the votes. The main issue was non-implementation of the Rajiv–Longowal accord by the Congress. The center was accused of not fulfilling its promises. The issues of Sikh identity and discrimination against Sikhs shaped the election campaign. In 1992, the boycott kept Congress opposition from the polls.

In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the Congress could win in only 32 assembly segments and lost in the remaining 85.[6] Further, the Congress could retain its hold only in the periphery of Punjab. In the 1998 Lok Sabha election, the Congress could not win even a single seat. The Akali Dal won eight, the Janata Dal one, and the BJP four seats. It has been marginalized in rural Punjab and could maintain its hold only on 55 percent of the urban and semi-urban assembly segments. This decline in urban support is attributed to the division of votes between the Congress and the BJP, particularly in Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, and Ferozpur. The Bharatiya Janata Party polled 7 percent of the votes in Jalandhar, 9 percent in Hoshiarpur, 12 percent in Ludhiana, and 18 percent in Ferozpur.[7]

The 1997 assembly election witnessed the worst ever performance of the Congress which secured only 14 seats with 26 percent of the votes. The Shiromani Akali Dal won the largest number of seats, i.e., 75, and polled 37 percent of the votes (see Table 11.5). The Bharatiya Janata Party won 18 seats and polled 8.33 percent of the votes. This performance is a marked change for Punjab's major political parties.

Cultural Zone-wise Voting Pattern

Traditionally, Punjab is divided into three regions: (1) Doaba (districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Nawanshahr, and Hoshiarpur), which is considered to be the stronghold of the Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). (2) Majha (districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur), a competing base of the Congress and the Akalis. (3) Malwa (the remaining districts), considered to be an Akali stronghold. The election results defied this division. The Congress was routed in Majha from where it could not win even a single seat as compared to 10 seats in the 1985 election. Similarly, the Congress could win only five seats in Doaba as compared to 10 in the 1985 election (see Table 11.6). Similarly, the

Table 11.5: Party-wise Percentage of Votes Polled and Seats Won in Assembly Elections, 1967–1997

Year of Election	*INC*	*JP/JD*	*BJP*	*CPI*	*CPM**	*SAD*
1967						
W/C	47/103	–	9/49	5/20	3/12	26/120
Votes polled (%)	37.7	–	9.8	5.3	3.2	24.7
1969						
W/C	38/103	–	8/30	4/28	2/10	43/65
Votes polled (%)	39.2	–	9.0	4.8	3.1	29.4
1972						
W/C	66/90	–	0/33	10/13	1/17	24/76
Votes polled (%)	42.8	–	5.0	6.5	3.3	28.5
1977						
W/C	17/96	25/41	–	7/18	8/8	58/70
Votes polled (%)	33.6	15.0	–	6.6	3.5	31.4
1980						
W/C	63/117	–	1/41	9/18	5/13	37/73
Votes polled (%)	45.2	–	6.5	6.5	4.1	26.9
1985						
W/C	32/117	–	6/26	1/37	0/28	73/100
Votes polled (%)	37.9	–	5.0	4.3	1.9	38.0
1992						
W/C	87/116	1/37	6/67	4/20	1/17	3/60
Votes polled (%)	49.27	2.22	16.5	1.56	3.97	2.58
1997						
W/C	14/105	–	18/55	2/15	0/25	75/92
Votes polled (%)	26.59	–	8.33	2.98	1.79	37.64

W/C = Won/Contested.
Source: Election Commission Reports, India, 1967–1997

Akalis lost four seats in their traditional Malwa stronghold in 1997 as compared to the 1985 election.

The results of elections during the period between 1992 and 1996 show that the Congress could not improve its support base even though it controlled the government. Nonetheless, in these elections, voters were committed to restoring the representative and competitive character of democracy.

Religion-based Vote Banks

The Akali Dal–BJP alliance defied the religious vote bank theory that Hindus vote for the Congress or the BJP and Sikhs for the Akalis

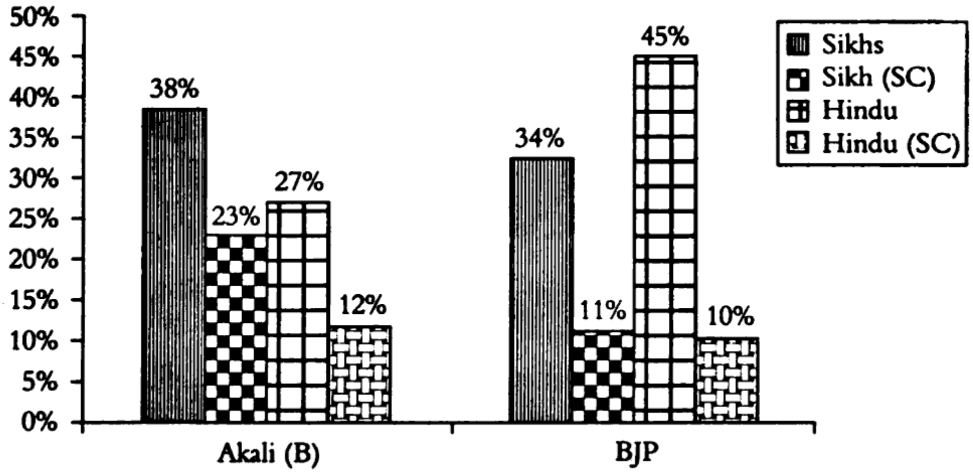
Table 11.6: Region-wise Seats Won by Akalis and Congress, 1997 and 1985

Year	*Doaba*	*Majha*	*Malwa*
1997			
Congress	5	0	9
Akali	13	18	44
1985			
Congress	10	10	12
Akali	11	14	48

Source: Election Commission Reports, India, 1985, 1997.

(see Figure 11.1). A sample survey on the eve of the 1997 assembly election showed that among the people who preferred to vote for the Akali Dal 38 percent were Sikhs, 27 percent Hindus, 12 percent Hindu SCs, and 23 percent Sikh SCs. Similarly, among those who preferred to vote for the BJP, 45 percent were Hindus, 34 percent Sikhs, 11 percent Sikh SCs, and 10 percent Hindu SCs.

Figure 11.1: Religion and Caste-wise Party Preferences



This clearly shows that the Akali Dal-BJP combine received support from all sections of society irrespective of their religion, caste or creed. By contrast, the Congress received a smaller number of Sikh voters, while the Bahujan Samaj Party could get only the support of Hindu SCs. and Sikh SCs.

Post-election Coalitions to Pre-election Alliances

Another important factor in these elections was the electoral alliances formed by the political parties. Punjab has a history of mergers, post-election coalitions, and electoral alliances of political parties. It is only recently that Punjab has formed pre-election electoral alliances, occasional seat adjustments notwithstanding. This process can be understood in three distinct contexts. The first context was the merger of the Akali Dal with the Congress in 1948 and in 1956.

Politics of Merger

In the first phase, from 1947 to the mid-1960s, one party dominance negated the existence of regional interests and branded these assertions as anti-national. The aura of the national freedom movement and its fall-out was the Congress Party which hegemonized the whole spectrum of Indian politics.

The politics of accommodation of regional interests was the main guiding principle of the Congress Party. It is within this framework that the Akalis were encouraged to merge with the Congress for the first time in 1948 and the second time in 1956. A convention of the members of the Akali Dal Working Committee, elected legislators, and Shri Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) jathedars was convened to restructure the activities of the Akali Dal. The convention was held in the background of the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission for the merger of Punjab, PEPSU, and Himachal Pradesh. The new state was to be divided into the so-called Punjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking regions, and two regional committees consisting of the members of the legislature belonging to the respective regions were to be constituted.[8]

The convention resolved to amend the constitution of the Akali Dal to confine their activities to the religious, educational, and economic welfare of the Sikhs. To quote:

1. The Akali Dal would not have any separate political program of its own.
2. The Dal would concentrate on the protection and promotion of religious, educational, cultural and economic interests of the Panth and would guard against any violation and infringement of

fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution that adversely hit the Sikhs.

3. The Dal would actively participate in the formulation and in the implementation of various plans for the development of the country.[9]

The Congress Party gave representation to the erstwhile Akali leaders in the Provincial Election Board. These leaders were S. Hukam Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, and S. Ajit Singh Sarhadi. The former Akalis in the Congress were functioning as Akalis within the Congress Party. They were expecting 40 seats in the provincial elections, but were given only 22 seats. The main negotiating plank of the former Akalis was that in the 1955 SGPC elections the Akali Dal had polled 75 percent of the Sikh votes and had secured 112 seats. Therefore, erstwhile members of the Akali Dal should be allocated 75 percent of the seats for the provincial assembly elections.[10] This communal arithmetic formed the basis of the Akali Dal's merger with the Congress.

The politics of accommodation was the main guiding principle, negating regional interests. Subsequent events proved that these interests were real and could not be subsumed by the co-option of a few individual leaders. This experiment did not succeed. The 'melting pot hypothesis' could not bring about ideological homogeneity. It became evident from the articulations of regional aspirations and communal demands within the Congress by Akali stalwarts who had joined the Congress. For instance, Pandit Mohan Lal, a senior Congressman, opines that Sardar Swaran Singh, a former Akali leader, had been successfully securing the support of some prominent Akalis in parliamentary elections even as a Congress candidate.[11] These former Akali leaders even claimed to have articulated the rights of Sikh Harijans, and managed to postpone for three years the nationalization of the transport business owned overwhelming by the 'Sikh community'.

In fact, Akali leaders in the Congress functioned as an exclusive group. The ideological influence of former Akalis was so powerful that it influenced the politics of the Congress. Even a secular leader like Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon flirted with SGPC elections. He managed to defeat Master Tara Singh of the Akali Dal in the SGPC election on November 16, 1958.

The Congress in order to subsume emerging regional aspirations provided legitimacy to the divisive articulation of interests. These accommodations helped the Congress increase its electoral strength. In the 1962 election, the Congress won 51 seats with 45.8 percent of the

total votes in the Punjabi-speaking region and 39 seats with 40.9 percent of the votes in the Hindi-speaking region.[12]

The erosion of the Akali support base led to renewed attempts to mobilize people around exclusive demands. The demand for a Punjabi Suba was raised. The Akali Dal made excessive use of religious symbols, idiom, and appeal to articulate its political demands. It was during this phase that the Akali Dal split into two groups. These groups were led by Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. In January 1965, the group led by Sant Fateh Singh won 95 of the 138 seats in the SGPC elections, giving a crushing defeat to the group led by Master Tara Singh. The split in the Akali Dal initiated a new phase in Punjab politics. It coincided with the reorganization of the state on a linguistic basis and the green revolution in agriculture. The Reorganization Act was passed in September 1966. This phase marked the beginning of coalition of political parties with anti-Congressism as a major thrust.

Post-election Coalitions

The second context was post-election coalitions. These coalition governments were formed with the sole purpose of thwarting the dominance of the Congress. Historically, the Akalis formed three coalition governments with the support of other opposition parties. Its main coalition partner was the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.

The first coalition was formed after the 4th General Election in 1967. In this election, the Congress won 47 seats in the 104-member state legislative assembly. The Akali Dal (Sant Fateh Singh) secured 24 seats, the Jan Sangh nine, the Communist Party of India five, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) three, the Republican Party three, and the Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh) two. (See Table 11.7). A united front of all parties was formed with S. Gurnam Singh as their leader. It was a combination of divergent ideological groups with the sole purpose of keeping the Congress out.

A common program was evolved at Khanna, and the resolution adopted read:

> Whereas we stand for amity and goodwill among all sections of Punjabis irrespective of caste or creed, and promise to take steps to strengthen the new state of Punjab economically and politically, we resolve to oppose all separatist trends and moves aimed at weakening the unity and integrity of the country.[13]

Table 11.7: Seats Won and Percentage of Votes Polled in Coalition Elections, 1967, 1969 and 1977

Year of Election	*INC*	*JP/JD*	*BJP*	*CPI*	*CPM*	*SAD*
1967						
W/C	47/103	–	9/49	5/20	3/12	26/120
Votes polled (%)	37.7	–	9.8	5.3	3.2	24.7
1969						
W/C	38/103	–	8/30	4/28	2/10	43/65
Votes polled (%)	39.2	–	9.0	4.8	3.1	29.4
1977						
W/C	17/96	25/41	–	7/18	8/8	58/70
Votes polled (%)	33.6	15.0	–	6.6	3.5	31.4

W/C = Won/Contested.
Source: Reports of Election Commission, India 1967, 1969, 1977.

Notwithstanding the common program, the hawks from these political parties started articulating their respective communal agendas. The communalist Hindus in Punjab strongly criticized the Jan Sangh leadership for betraying the cause of Hindi. This forced its leadership to demand that Hindi should be given the same status as before the reorganization. A Cabinet subcommittee which was appointed left the matter to Sant Fateh Singh and Mr Yagya Dutt Sharma to evolve a compromise formula on the status to be accorded to Punjabi and Hindi. However, no decision was reached since the ministry fell due to the defection of Mr Lachman Singh Gill.

The second coalition was formed after the mid-term election of February 1969, in which the Akali Dal won 43 seats and the Jan Sangh 8. The coalition government was headed by S. Gurnam Singh. Differences among the coalition partners arose over issues like language, center–state relations, and the status of Chandigarh.

The third coalition came into being after the removal of S. Gurnam Singh as the chief minister of Punjab. S. Prakash Singh Badal was sworn in as chief minister on March 27, 1970, with a new agenda of the coalition government. The Jan Sangh withdrew from the coalition in June 1970 on the question of the jurisdiction of Guru Nanak Dev University. However, the main differences were on issues relating to the transfer of certain Punjabi-speaking areas to Punjab.[14]

These post-election coalitions were in continuation of the politics of accommodation pursued by the Congress in the pre-reorganization phase. The co-option of leaders representing divergent ideological

persuasions and regional interests in the so-called national mainstream sharpened the conflicts. In other words, these coalitions were formed with the sole aim of capturing power. These were marriages of convenience for the leadership, whereas their ranks held each other with deep suspicion.

Pre-election Electoral Alliances

The third context is pre-electoral alliances between competing political parties. The undercurrent of these alliances was the lessons and issues relating to the decade of terrorism. In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the Akali Dal entered into an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party and seat adjustment with the Bharatiya Janata Party.[15] The new electoral arithmetic had many hidden potentials and inherent contradictions. The alliance adversely affected the Congress Party's performance and resulted in a decline in the support for the Congress among the Scheduled Castes who constitute 28.5 percent of the total population of Punjab, perhaps the highest in India.

The impact of the alliances is easily discernible in the Doaba region consisting of Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, and Phillaur constituencies. Doaba has been a traditional stronghold of the Congress. The Congress has maintained its dominance in this region since 1967, except in the 1977 and 1989 elections. In both these elections, the Congress was defeated by a multi-party alliance. For example, the BSP won the Hoshiarpur seat after two successive defeats. It secured 19.7 percent and 26.5 percent of the votes in the 1989 and 1992 elections respectively. It secured 39.5 percent of the votes in the 1996 elections. Kanshi Ram, the BSP supremo, could win the seat only because of the active support of the Akali Dal (B). In Hoshiarpur, according to an estimate, the Jat Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes together constituted around 44 percent of the votes polled. Kanshi Ram polled around 40 percent of the valid votes (see Table 11.8). Assuming that all Scheduled Caste votes polled went to the BSP, Kanshi Ram still needed around 14 percent additional votes. In this case it can be safely presumed that the Akali Dal (B) support provided the winning margin.

Similarly, the Akali Dal (B) candidate could win the Jalandhar seat due to the swing in Scheduled Caste votes in favor of the Akali Dal. The Jalandhar seat has been won by the Congress since 1967, except in 1977 and 1989. In these two elections, a multi-party alliance gave the winning

Table 11.8: Estimated Votes Polled According to Caste: Lok Sabha Election 1996

Sikh Votes	*Sikh Votes Polled (% of Total Votes)*	*SC Votes*	*SC Votes Polled (% of Total Votes)*	*Total Sikh + SC Votes Polled (% of Total)*	*Polling %*	*Winning Candidate's Votes %*	*% Winning Margin*	*Constituency*
20.5	29.5	28.8	28.8	58.35	65.86	35.24	11.06	Gurdaspur
27.8	27.12	24.9	24.34	51.46	58.7	41.03	5.35	Amritsar
23.1	22.37	34.7	33.61	55.97	58.57	44.98	3.02	Jalandhar
19.8	19.48	24.9	25.02	44.51	57.57	39.50	1.88	Hoshiarpur
46.7	46.78	31.4	34.4	81.2	63.99	43.20	5.4	Taran Taran
34.8	34.59	30.5	30.17	64.8	59.71	48.02	8.1	Phillaur
37.3	36.70	21.8	21.44	58.2	58.9	48.5	10.51	Ropar
31.05	29.93	22.3	21.43	51.4	58.9	46.46	7.2	Patiala
44.4	43.89	27.7	27.39	71.27	72.01	39.04	4.84	Faridkot
41.9	41.76	24.8	24.61	66.37	61.3	44.72	13.64	Bathinda
40.2	40.56	25.1	25.29	65.85	71.72	32.07	10.82	Sangrur
36.5	36.34	18.9	18.78	55.2	60.2	45.60	13.1	Ludhiana
28.2	28.20	11.9	18.04	46.24	64.02	36.83	8.34	Ferozpur

Note: 1. Data on caste estimates have been collected from a leading political party, therefore, it can only provide broad indications.
2. Percentage of votes polled by castes have been calculated as a representative percentage of population from total votes polled.

edge to non-Congress parties. In 1989, Inder Kumar Gujral of the Janata Dal won this seat with the active support of the Akalis. According to a rough estimate, the Jat Sikh and Scheduled Caste votes constituted around 56 percent of the votes polled. Jat Sikh votes were approximately 22 percent. Assuming that all these votes were polled in favor of the Akali Dal, which secured 45 percent of the total votes polled, it could not have won without the support of the Scheduled Castes and non-Jat Sikhs. Similar is the case in Phillaur constituency.

In the Malwa region, the alliance also worked to the advantage of the Akalis, particularly in Ropar, Patiala, Faridkot, Bathinda, Sangrur, and Ludhiana. In Sangrur, for instance, Surjit Singh Barnala, a former chief minister of Punjab, was opposed by Simranjit Singh Mann, who is known for his radical views. In this constituency, Jat Sikhs' votes polled were around 40 percent. These were divided between Mr Barnala and Mr Mann. Barnala's winning margin was around 11 percent (see Table 11.9). This was mainly contributed by the Scheduled Caste votes.

In the 1997 assembly election, the Akali Dal entered into an alliance with the BJP. The main reasons for the alliance were the emergence of the BJP as a major national party, and the electorate's concern for Punjabi unity rather than pursuing a divisive separatist agenda. This alliance was political and not merely electoral, because the Akali Dal needed a political space at the national level to shed its anti-national image and the BJP needed to counter the Congress and Left propaganda that its politics was anti-minorities.

Further, it was argued, that this alliance would promote and cement unity between the two religious groups and help to reconstruct Punjab's fractured society. A section of the media termed this alliance as communal and therefore it had the potential to create tensions. They expressed the fear that it might not last long like the three coalition governments formed in the mid-1960s. In response to this, it was argued that the earlier alliances were post-election coalitions. This was pre-election unity which had obtained the mandate of the people and adopted the agenda set by the people. Therefore, it might not be easy for the parties to return to their own agendas. For example, a majority of the voters in the 1997 election did not mention issues like state autonomy or the Anandpur Sahib resolution. In their agenda, peace ranked high, accompanied by concerns such as unemployment, price rise, and better returns for crops (see Table 11.9).[16]

To sum up, it is interesting to note that the main plank of the politics of merger, post- or pre-election coalitions has been to promote Punjabi

Table 11.9: People's Agenda for Elections

Parties' Agenda	*Percentage of People Aware*
Accountability for terrorism	12.00
Peace building	20.00
Corruption	15.00
Economic issues	44.00
No reply	2.00
Revival of terrorism	7.00

Source: IDC Election Survey, 1997.

unity. In the 1967 post-election coalition, the common program adopted at Khanna reinforcing the need for Punjabi unity formed the basis of the coalition. But the redefining of the agenda in the 1997 and 1998 elections was not the result of any electoral alliance. It has been shaped by the people and is the outcome of the lessons learnt from the reign of terror in Punjab for 10 years. Therefore, it has greater chances of lasting longer.

People's Agenda: Resurge of Democracy

Political parties having lost control over events in the wake of terrorism could not impose their ideological and political program in the post-1992 phase. Earlier, political postures taken by the Akali Dal had been instrumental, to a large extent, in giving direction to Punjab's politics. Even the Akali Dal had to shift its agenda from politico-religious identity[17] to non-communal formations. The Shiromani Akali Dal president, Prakash Singh Badal, brought the notion of Punjabi unity to the center-stage of Punjab politics mainly to draw legitimacy for its slogan of ensuring lasting peace in the state.

> Peace in Punjab is very dear to us. We will make all endeavours to ensure peace and harmony that will last. The unity of all Punjabis could be the only true and dependable basis of lasting peace and there could be no social and political stability without Punjabi unity.[18]

This gave the Akali Dal an added advantage over the Congress which is seen as anti-Sikh due to its role in Operation Blue Star and the November 1984 riots. It is in this background that the Akali Dal

structured its campaign with a major thrust on anti-Congressism. In a statement, Akali Dal President, Prakash Singh Badal asked 'All Punjabis to join hands in the massive task of social restructuring and economic rebuilding by making sure that anti-people and anti-Punjab Congress regime is routed from the state, lock stock and barrel.'[19]

The main plank of the Akali Dal was that the unity of all Punjabis could be the only true and dependable basis of lasting peace and there could be no social and political stability without Punjabi unity. This seems to have been prompted by the fact that during the phase of terrorism, legitimate demands like state autonomy, a greater share in river waters, and the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab had degenerated into the movement for 'Khalistan' which played havoc with people's lives.

In all the previous elections, the main stance of the Akali Dal had been anti-center and it was in this context that their demand for greater state autonomy was understood. The anti-center stance of the Shiromani Akali Dal remained dominant till 1997. At an emergency meeting of the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal held in February 1993, under the chairmanship of Prakash Singh Badal, deep resentment was expressed at the center's 'continuing policy of betrayal, treachery, discrimination and tyranny against Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular, a policy which has been in force for the past 45 years.'[20] However, in the post-1997 elections, the Akali campaign did not revolve around anti-centrism. The Akali Dal manifesto for the 1997 Lok Sabha election put emphasis on cooperative federalism rather than on anti-centrism.

> The Akali–BJP government has opened a new chapter in Centre-State relations, ushering in the age of cooperative federalism in the country. The era of confrontations has been effectively ended and replaced with a forward-looking thrust on working together for the over-all good of the state and the nation.[21]

Political changes in the national political scene brought about a change of perception among the average Sikh. For instance, in rural Punjab especially, the Congress no longer symbolized the central power. Therefore, if the Akalis addressed their supporters towing an anti-Congress line, they were not considered as 'anti-center' and thus anti-national. But in these elections, the Akali campaign did not revolve around anti-centrism. Rather, it emphasized greater autonomy for the state.[22]

As for the Congress, there is only a marginal change in its priorities in the state. The attitude stems from its perception that even after the assassination of Chief Minister Beant Singh, 'peace with prosperity' continues to be the main guiding principle of the people's political preference in Punjab. The marginal shift in the Congress agenda in the post-Beant Singh phase has been from an emphasis on liberal market reforms to economic subsidies for most sections of society. The economic concessions offered by the Congress government on the eve of the elections included concessions for the peasantry, urban traders, landless labor, Dalits, people in the services and various other occupations, apart from the poor.

Similarly, the main emphasis of the Akali–BJP combine was also on subsidies. Interestingly, all the dominant political parties, i.e., the Congress, the BJP, and the Akalis, approved market reforms in principle, but made electoral promises against these reforms.[23] In these elections, votes were sought for subsidies and people have voted for them. Subsidies have been used as a poverty-alleviating and vote-catching device. The politics of populism became more pronounced with the introduction of economic reforms. Political parties in order to out-compete each other promised doles. The Akali–BJP alliance gave doles immediately after capturing power in the state in 1997. It did not take notice of the fact that in the state economic growth rates have been falling and in 1986 it had fallen below the national average. According to a report of a committee of officers.

> The revenue deficit has reached 2.7 percent of GSDP in 1996–97. The revenue expenditure has increased from 12.23 percent in 1985–86 to 16.76 percent in 1996–97. As a consequence of this, the committee reports, development process will gradually come to a halt and government shall be able to pay only for its own continuance.
>
> It has also highlighted that the explicit subsidies have doubled from Rs 52.03 crore in 1994–95 to Rs 106.13 crore in 1996–97. The total amount of implicit subsidies was estimated to be Rs 2,702.86 crore.[24]

The dismal financial situation could not deter the alliance from announcing free electricity to the agricultural sector and doles for other segments of the population. The politics of populism and a shift in the political agenda remained the main dominant features till 1998.

Akali Dal Factionalism and Extremism

This agenda got a set-back in early 1999 when factional fighting between Shiromani Akali Dal President Prakash Singh Badal and SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra surfaced. History has witnessed that intra party factionalism within the Akali Dal has the potential to degenerate and vitiate inter-community relations. This is a negation of the process of reconciliation initiated by the resurgence of democratic politics in Punjab in the post-1992 phase. Moderate politics is supine and placates the fundamentalists as was done in the 1980s by Giani Zail Singh, a former Congress chief minister of Punjab.

The ideological position of the Akali Dal has its basis in a monolith Sikh identity. The interaction of this ideological position with the specific nature of socio-cultural and economic development leads to a diverse kind of political activity within Akali politics. These diverse political activities within the Akali Dal can be understood vis-à-vis the competing ideological positions represented by Prakash Singh Badal, and Gurcharan Singh Tohra. The political space occupied by Prakash Singh Badal, a moderate political leader, is mainly in the domain of the politics of development, followed by Punjabi identity, and least in the sphere of religious politics. On the contrary, Gurcharan Singh Tohra draws political strength mainly from religious issues. He is not seen as a symbol of socio-economic development within the framework of moderate politics.

In other words, the moderate political position falls in a broad spectrum of subsidies for farmers, unemployment and Punjabi identity. By contrast, the Tohra faction functions within the religious minority frame with issues like protection of the rights of the minorities within India, rights of the Sikh minority settled in Udham Singh Nagar in Uttar Pradesh, People's Commission on Human Rights, Sikh Civil Code, religious codes of conduct, and banning of left-oriented cultural activities. The power equation between the two factions gets disturbed if one tries to violate the other's space. For instance, appropriation of religious space by the Badal faction disturbs the equilibrium and sharpens the factional fight between these groups.[25] This, in turn, pushes the Tohra faction to build bridges with extreme fundamentalism.

These competing positions operate to maximize their space, which can be termed as 'bridge politics', in which each faction tries to build bridges with political tendencies other than the competing faction. Prakash Singh Badal launched himself in the religious domain on

January 7, 1999 at Anandpur Sahib with a desire to decimate the SGPC president, Gurcharan Singh Tohra.[26] This brought him in direct conflict with Tohra and the Akal Takht Chief, Bhai Ranjit Singh. Both these factions in order to checkmate each other are increasingly operating in the religious domain. Having infiltrated the space of religious leaders, Mr Badal has started politics of confrontation with individuals rather than fundamentalism. This trend got an impetus by the 'bridge politics' followed by the apex Akali leadership. Instead of co-opting each other, the major factions started building bridges with fringe elements bringing religion-based politics to the centerstage.

Mr Tohra bestowing *siropas* on April 13, 1997 (Baisakhi day) on the relatives of slain militants such as the younger son of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, and family members of the assassins of Indira Gandhi and General A.S. Vaidya was the beginning of the 'bridge politics' where the mainstay of factionalism within moderate politics was to reinforce religious fundamentalism. Similarly, the former Punjab technical education minister, Manjit Singh Calcutta (Tohra faction) suggested that ***kirtan*** classes and religious prayers should be held in schools.[27]

Akal Takht Jathedar, Bhai Ranjit Singh, issued a series of codes of conduct. He ordered all gurdwaras to maintain *Sangat te Pangat di Maryada* by sitting on the floor while partaking of the *langar*. He banned installation of the Granth Sahib in hotels and marriage halls for the purpose of *Anand Karaj* (weddings), and selling or burning of spare *gutkas* (holy scriptures) as waste paper.[28] Further the AISSF, the sword arm of the militant leader, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, at a congregation resolved to start *Singh Sajo Lehar* (baptism).[29] At Anandpur Sahib on January 7, 1999 Mr Badal hijacked the religious agenda and chalked out a program of baptisms and puritanism. Mr Badal also presided over the ninth anniversary of Bhai Harminder Singh Sandhu, a former general secretary of the Sikh Students Federation and a close associate of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. A similar trend was noticed in the early 1980s when the *Amrit Parchar Lehar* (baptism movement through partaking of 'amrit') to create a religious reservoir was misappropriated into politics. This provided the basis for launching a separatist movement.

Akali Dal factionalism can only conceivably lead to competitive religiosity with greater emphasis on Sikh issues, which are communally divisive, and therefore have a potential to revive communal and separatist politics and enable militancy to return. However, democratic politics thus far has been successful in keeping these issues in the background. But political parties are increasingly acquiring more space and thereby

imposing their own agenda. For instance, the Akali Dal's return to the panthic theme may lead to the subversion of the agenda of Punjabi unity. The developments of the last two decades have clearly shown that the politics of divisiveness has its basis in the struggle for power among factions and/or individual leaders. It has also shown that the 'threat and need paradox' of democracy continued to guide the political activities in the state. In other words, choices are exercised in response to the threat posed to the powers that be by competing groups within legislative politics.

As a result, bridges are made with those fringe groups which are a threat to the system, but can help checkmate the competing faction within legislative politics. This happened in the 1980s also when Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a radical Sikh leader, was patronised to control the increasing influence of the Akali Dal moderates on the legislative politics of the state. It appears the process has started all over again.

Notes and References

1. Pramod Kumar, 'Transcending the Divide', *Deccan Herald* (Bangalore), February 16, 1997.
2. See, Pramod Kumar and Yogendra Yadav, 'The Real Contest in Punjab', *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), February 9, 1992.
3. In the direct elections to the panchayat samitis, 65.3 percent, and to the zila parishads, 63.7 percent, votes were polled. P. S. Verma, 'Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Elections in Punjab: Revival of Political Activity', *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 22, 1995, p. 1325.
4. Direct elections to 40 percent of the seats to the panchayat samitis and zila parishads were held in the second phase. In the first phase on September 27, 1994, only sarpanches cast their votes to 60 percent of the seats. See, Verma, 'Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Elections' (Note 3 above).
5. The Punjab Accord was signed on July 24, 1985, between the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the then president of the Akali Dal(S), Harchand Singh Longowal.
6. Election Commission, *Handbook General Elections, 1997, to the Legislative Assembly to Punjab* (New Delhi: Election Commission, 1997).
7. Election Commission *Handbook* (Note 6 above).
8. The Government of India in December 1953 appointed the State Reorganization Commission. In 1954, the Akalis launched a vigorous agitation for the Punjabi Suba demand. For example, processions were taken out by Akalis at Ludhiana (on the eve of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday) and at Amritsar (the Hola Mohalla procession) in December 1954, and March 1955 respectively. The continued and persistent agitations and protests worsened the situation. The morchas launched acquired a communal coloring.

9. The resolution was unanimously passed on September 20, 1956. Ajit Singh Sarhadi *Punjabi Suba: Story of the Struggle* (Delhi: U.C. Kapur, 1970), p. 284.
10. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba* (Note 9 above), pp. 292–326.
11. Mohan Lal, *Disintegration of Punjab* (Chandigarh: Sammer Prakashan, 1984), p. 318.
12. Pramod Kumar, Manmohan Sharma, Atul Sood and Ashwani Handa, *Punjab Crisis: Context and Trends* (Chandigarh: CRRID, 1984), p. 46.
13. 'Sangh–Akali Bid to Form Government: Complete Accord Reached', *The Tribune* (Ambala), March 2, 1967.
14. During this phase of the post-reorganization period, the Akali leadership kept on fighting for the following three demands:

    1. Abolition of common links. The Reorganization Act had provided 42 common links between Punjab and Haryana. Some of the common links were, for example, the Control Board, pending division of assets, and PEPSU road transport.
    2. Return of Chandigarh and the dam project controlled by the central government.
    3. Inclusion of certain Punjabi-speaking areas (allegedly excluded from Punjab).

    The prime minister awarded Chandigarh to Punjab, and Fazilka and Abohar and 114 villages to Haryana. The decision still remains unimplemented.
15. There was seat adjustment for four parliamentary constituencies and in Ludhiana constituency the BJP fought on its own. Pramod Kumar, 'Congress Hopes Belied', *Frontline*, June 14, 1996.
16. Institute for Development and Communication, 'Tilt Towards Akali Dal(B)–BJP Alliance', *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), February 1, 1997.
17. Excerpts from the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, October 23, 1983 adopted by the Shiromani Akali Dal. In this resolution, the main aims of the Akali Dal have been propagation of religion and Sikh tenets and condemnation of atheism, maintaining the realization of the Panth's independent entity, and creation of such an environment where Sikh sentiment can find its full expression. See, for details, Pramod Kumar et.al., *Punjab Crisis* (Note 12 above), p. 128.
18. Statement issued by Prakash Singh Badal at Meet the Press, Chandigarh Press Club, November 1996.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Resolution of the Akali Dal Working Committee meeting held on 19 February, 1993.
21. Akali Dal election manifesto, 1998.
22. Moga Resolution of the Akali Dal, February 22, 1996.
23. See for details, Congress Government People Oriented Action Plan, 22 December, 1996; and Common Minimum Program of the Akali Dal–Bharatiya Janata Party alliance, 1997.
24. Government of Punjab, *A Strategy of Fiscal Management for Punjab* (Chandigarh: Department of Finance, 1998).
25. Jagtar Singh, 'My Party and Government is Panthic', *The Indian Express* (Chandigarh), February 27, 1999.
26. Sarabjit Pandher, 'Badal Makes Tactical Truce with Tohra', *The Hindu* (New Delhi), January 8, 1999.
27. 'Club Religion with Education: Calcutta', *The Indian Express* (Chandigarh), November 28, 1997.
28. Bhavdeep Kang, 'Embers of an Old Fire', *Outlook*, June 8, 1998.
29. AISSF, 'Lead, then Dictate', *The Indian Express* (Chandigarh), November 29, 1998.

12

Elections in Kashmir: A Question of Pragmatism

Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay

After a seven-year period of widespread political insurgency in the Kashmir Valley demanding *azadi* (freedom) and of concomitant president's rule in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, three sets of elections were recently successfully conducted. In 1996, the parliamentary and then the state legislative assembly elections were held, followed in 1998 by election for the Lok Sabha. This has restored a measure of confidence, particularly in official circles, that the democratic process has begun to strengthen civil society in the troubled Valley. Many are reassured by the fact that in the most recent election the voter turnout was a respectable 44 percent, despite a boycott by the nationalist-based political umbrella organization, Hurriyat. Specifically in Srinagar, Badgam, and Baramulla, where the militant nationalist/secessionist movement has been based, the voter turnout was 24, 63, and 42 percent respectively. Moreover, claims that the army had coerced the Valley population to cast their vote, which had accompanied the first two elections, did not resurface in the latest parliamentary election.

The current sanguine official view that the Valley is slowly being integrated into the political process has been bolstered by the fact that Farooq Abdullah's popularly elected government has undertaken various political and economic initiatives such as the amendment of the

Panchayati Raj bill and the successful completion of elections to panchayats after 17 years; establishment of a state Human Rights Commission and separate panels for regional and greater autonomy to the state; the approval of various provisions to encourage the return of the Hindu community to the Valley; and the legislation of several other initiatives in the areas of health, social services, and employment. In addition, the Abdullah government has made autonomy for the state a major issue in its political platform and has unequivocally reiterated that Article 370 remains a sacred constitutional bulwark which no national government will be allowed to touch.

Even the tourism industry has begun to pick up slowly. According to one estimate, 6,000 tourists visited the Kashmir Valley in the first five months of 1998, although this still constitutes a tiny fraction of the peak 1989 annual total of 557,000 visitors. Both the central and state governments have made efforts to reduce the army's strength in the Valley (for example, all six Border Security Force battalions present in 1996 have been pulled out) and have increased the strength of the regional police force. The Special Operations Group (SOG) and other combat groups of the Jammu and Kashmir police have been the major actors in curbing counter-terrorist operations across the state.

In addition, the Hurriyat Conference has recently begun to splinter. With the election of Syed Ali Shah Gillani of the Jamaat-e-Islami as chairman of the Hurriyat, the outgoing chairman, Maulvi Omar Farooq, reactivated his father's political party, the Awami Action Committee, and staged an impressive political procession of 15,000 supporters in what was the first political rally allowed by the government since 1990. Meanwhile, another key Hurriyat leadership figure, Shabir Shah, has set up a new political party, the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party, to assert his independence from the Jamaat's pro-Pakistan and Islamic approach to the Kashmir issue. He has even offered to participate in the electoral process if it is supervised by an NGO (even one based in India), a significant moderation of the Hurriyat position that international or UN supervision was a pre-condition for its participation in elections. However, the recent disclosure that Shabir Shah had accumulated assets of Rs 1 crore from donations received from foreign sources for the Kashmir nationalist movement has largely eroded his credibility.

External factors also lend support to the Indian and Farooq governments' confidence that the population of the Kashmir Valley has been

rapidly abandoning its support for the secessionist/nationalist cause: the Pakistan Hezbul Mujahideen's evident frustration with the Hurriyat in its appointment of Syed Salahuddin, the leader of the Pakistan Hezbul, as supreme commander of the United Jehad Council to coordinate the militant activity in the Valley instead of relying upon its Valley counterpart; the United States' open war on Harkat-ul-Ansar (the major provider of 'guest militants' to Kashmir's secessionist/nationalist cause); and the recent demonstration of Indian nuclear strength.

But is this confident view really justified? During 1997, 1,200 civilians were killed by militants. Among these were included 23 Kashmiri Pandits massacred in Wandhama village, near Srinagar; 25 members of a Hindu wedding procession in Chapnari, Doda; and 26 Hindus in Parankot village in Udhampur who refused conversion to Islam. The Valley remains virtually homogeneously Islamic and has not been able to revive its traditions of Kashmiriyat. Despite the state government's financial incentives to the Kashmiri Hindu community, the National Human Rights Commission has noted that there are only 800 Pandit families left in the Valley, and most of these are planning to leave in what will be the concluding stage of a mass exodus. Kashmiri militants are still being trained in Pakistan and, according to one report, the Taliban is actively involved in militant training in camps operating at Gadi Habib, Nowsheri, Nowsada, Kotla, and Biber. According to intelligence reports, about 150 recruits of the Hezbul Mujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Toiba, and the Harkat-ul-Ansar have crossed the border in a five-month period, 'a number unprecedented in recent years'.[1] In addition, Farooq Abdullah's already shaky legitimacy in the Valley is being further eroded by his active support of the BJP government and of its pro-active Kashmir policy, which India's Home Minister L. K. Advani has defined as crushing the 'proxy war' in Kashmir without going to war with Pakistan.

In this essay I would like to suggest that any realistic interpretation of elections, particularly the 1998 parliamentary election, and their success or non-success in the Kashmir Valley must inevitably be intertwined with the larger issue of the intervening role of the Indian state to reconcile state and popular nationalisms in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This makes it crucial for any analyst to locate the discussion of any recent election in the Valley within a historical perspective, where the issues of identity, nationalism, and governance provide the framework for understanding the electoral practices of the population. In generating formal nationalism, a state plays a complex role in the construction

of an identity by naming it, modifying it, or reconstructing it through its legal and constitutional apparatus. This process of identity construction is often based upon the reconciliation of formal and popular nationalisms by simultaneously acknowledging similarities and differences between the two. In the aftermath of the tribal invasion of Kashmir in 1947 and the treaty of accession of Kashmir to India, the Indian state, through the constitutional provision of Article 370, acknowledged the distinctness of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in terms of its religious and cultural diversity, and historical and political specificity, thereby allowing an asymmetrical relation within the Indian federal structure. Yet, on the other hand, the Indian leadership forged a common destiny for Kashmir and India on the shared goals of secularism, socialism, and democracy. Kashmiriyat, the distinct identity of the Kashmiris and the National Conference's New Kashmir Manifesto (two fundamental themes of the nationalist movement headed by Sheikh Abdullah against the Hindu ruler) became the basis of the association between them. However, tensions and contradictions between formal and informal nationalism began to emerge when, after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, the Indian state slowly and steadily embarked on a path of de facto integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir within its fold by extending to it various constitutional and legal ordinances.

These tensions were to remain more or less in the background until the early 1970s. The ability of Kashmir's ruling party to keep the structures of dissent at once inaudible and disorganized rested upon the successful pursuance of short-term state strategies of patronage politics and constricting public space for opposition political parties.[2] The Valley population's substantial participation in the electoral process from 1972 onwards was essentially a positive response to the benefits of patronage politics, but was also a result of their not having been mobilized by dissenting groups. The early successes of the electoral process did not mean, as the dominant interpretation by the Indian state would have it, a conscious choice by the Kashmiri population for integration with the Indian polity. Identity issues, however, had taken a back seat until the early 1970s and really only became prominent with the reappearance of Sheikh Abdullah on the political scene in 1975. Sheikh Abdullah, while continuing his predecessors' reliance on patronage politics, brought the issue of Kashmiri identity into the foreground. Subsequently, the convergence of a number of factors was to bring identity issues explosively into dominance: the saturation of the patronage system, the continuing

lack of economic development, mounting unemployment among the urban middle class, the unpopularity of the National Conference–Congress alliance, the patent rigging of the 1987 assembly election, Pakistan's persistent intervention in the Kashmir issue and its involvement in the training of militants, and an external backdrop of globally spreading fundamentalism and increasing international acceptance of the ideology of regional autonomy. The result was the eruption of a full-scale, mass-supported political insurgency demanding *azadi*, or freedom, for Kashmir. In pursuing its goal of *azadi*, one of the major items on the agenda of secessionist/nationalist groups was to render state nationalism impotent. Accordingly, the Valley population was made to boycott the 1989 parliamentary election in order to refute the Indian claim that participation in elections implied Kashmir's acknowledgment that it was an integral part of India.

If participation in elections by the Valley's Muslim population is not linked to state nationalism and does not reflect the Valley's choice to be a part of the Indian state, how can one explain the respectable voter turnout in the three recent elections? How can one not read into the limited success of the electoral process and the ensuing calmness in the Kashmir Valley the abandonment or, at a minimum, the severe weakening of the Valley population's desire for *azadi*? In this essay, I suggest that the Kashmiri Muslim population has indeed not abandoned the cause of *azadi* and that, instead, participation in the elections should be seen to imply the Valley's need to return to the pre-insurgency state of affairs. There are four factors which have contributed to a hiatus in the *azadi* movement. These are, in an ascending order of importance: (*a*) the persistent violence by both the state and militants; (*b*) the declining military power of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and the discomfort of the population with the Jihad approach of the Hezbul Mujahideen (particularly of the so-called 'guest militants'); (*c*) a lack of access of the local population to patronage politics through regional politicians during president's rule; and (*d*) an absence of closure to the secessionist movement. The Valley's Muslim population has, in effect, reverted to a familiar state of politics where electoral participation and *azadi* are two distinct domains: participation in the political process is linked to obtaining economic and political goods, while *azadi* demands relate to the issue of distinct identity. But the Indian state, in seeking both internal and external legitimacy for itself by initiating the political process in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, may have inadvertently—

and beneficially—embarked upon the path of reconciling formal and informal nationalism. It has openly courted the National Conference, a moderate political party, and its leader, Farooq Abdullah (the new chief minister), who has made autonomy for the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the retention of Article 370 the dominant themes of his party and government. However, if the Indian state should fail to operationalize the autonomy structures for Jammu and Kashmir, an almost certain outcome if it should (naively or disingenuously) misinterpret the recent elections, then it is likely that a combination of forces will, in the near future, reactivate the Valley's at present inaudible and unmobilized structures of identity-based politics and build up once again a strong momentum for the secessionist movement.

The following discussion is in four parts—the first three providing a background to the recent 1998 parliamentary election. The first section provides a historical discussion of the concept of citizenship under the Permanent Residents legislation which, while allowing special status within the state, recognized the Kashmiris' right to select their representatives to the Indian parliament. It will be also pointed out that the initial arrangements agreed upon by the Indian state and the Jammu and Kashmir government in 1952 (to give the latter complete control over the electoral process) was abolished in 1956, thus setting the course for the steady integration of the state into the Indian polity. The second section reviews the assembly elections during this integrative period when political mobilization and patronage politics become closely intertwined. In particular, the restricted public space for opposition groups in the Valley made it quite essential for the population to vote for the ruling party if they wanted to obtain political and economic goods, mostly dispensed through the expansion of employment opportunities in the public sector. The third section explains the confluence of electoral participation with identity issues. As a result of the Sheikh's re-entry into Kashmir politics and his revival of the issue of Kashmir's distinct identity by demanding the pre-1953 political status for the state, as well of Mrs Gandhi's interventionist strategy into regional politics and her playing the Hindu hand, Kashmir politics entered a new of era of regional–religious cleavages. The final section analyzes the post-insurgency elections in the Valley, including the 1998 parliamentary election. The following sections are preceded by a description of the electoral map of the state in order to help contextualize the post-insurgency assembly and parliamentary elections in the Valley.

Electoral Map

The electoral map of the state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three regions and 14 districts: Kashmir with six districts, Ladakh with two, and Jammu with six. According to the 1996 election statistics, there are 2.37 million eligible voters in the Kashmir region. Kashmir's districts are Srinagar (564,0000), followed by Anantnag (508,000), and Baramulla (492,000), and the smaller districts of Kupwara, Badgam, and Anantnag. The Ladakh region, with an electorate of 138,000, consists of Ladakh and Kargil districts. The Jammu region has 2.24 million voters. Jammu's districts are Jammu (837,248), followed by Udhampur (343,000), and the smaller districts of Doda, Kathua, Rajouri, and Poonch. For the 1996 assembly election, 76 constituencies covering the whole state were expanded into 87, as recommended by the State Delimitation Commission—46 in Kashmir, four in Ladakh, and 37 in Jammu.

For parliamentary elections, the state is divided into six constituencies, three in the Kashmir region (Baramulla, Srinagar, and Anantnag), one in Ladakh, and two in the Jammu region (Udhampur and Jammu). Baramulla parliamentary constituency, with a total electorate of 761,265 in 1998, consists of two districts—Baramulla and Kupwara. The Srinagar parliamentary constituency, with a total electorate of 853,183 in 1998, is composed of the districts of Srinagar and Badgam. Anantang constituency, with a total electorate of 804,983, is composed of Pulwama and Anantnag districts.

Electoral Process and Citizenship in Post-1947 Kashmir

The present geographical and political boundaries of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, with its three distinct regions of the Kashmir Valley (predominantly Kashmiri speaking Muslims), Jammu (majority Dogri speaking Hindus), and Ladakh (mostly Buddhists), took shape when Jammu's ruler, Maharaja Gulab Singh, annexed the kingdom of Ladakh in 1834 and acquired the Valley as a result of a sale deed from the British in 1846. Due to British trade interests in Central Asia and concerns over Russian expansion, the state was quickly integrated into the colonial empire and the rulers of Kashmir were compelled to introduce constitutional and administrative reforms. The *Jammu and Kashmir*

Constitution Act of 1939 laid the foundations for an elected legislative assembly, the Praja Sabha, with 75 members. Thirty-three members (21 Muslims, 10 Hindus, and two Sikhs) were to be elected according to the rules determined by the 1933 Franchise Committee. Although an educational qualification restricted the right to vote to those who had obtained a middle school certificate, the most significant eligibility requirement was that voters be state-subjects as defined in Maharaja Hari Singh's 1927 notification. The 1939 constitution, with several amendments in the post-accession period when political power was transferred from the ruler of the state to the political leadership of the National Conference Party, became both the basis for determining Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the Indian state and the framework of the state's new constitution promulgated in January 1957.

Jammu and Kashmir was one of the three princely states whose rulers hesitated to join either India or Pakistan after the withdrawal of the British from India. As a result of the tribal invasion from the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan and his inability to defend the state's borders, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to sign the treaty of accession with India. The Indian government duly accepted the offer with the condition that once law and order had been restored in the state, the people's wishes would be ascertained regarding the accession. Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah, leader of Kashmir's nationalist movement against the Hindu ruler, first headed the emergency administration in the state and then constituted the first popular government in 1948. Under the Indian constitution, 1950, Article 370 defines the legal and constitutional relationship of the state within the Indian union. Under the provisions of the Indian constitution, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was given the right to institute its own constituent assembly and frame a separate constitution. On the recommendations of the General Council of the National Conference, on May 1, 1951, the Kashmir head of state, Prince Karan Singh, issued a proclamation ordering elections for the constituent assembly on the basis of adult universal suffrage and secret ballot. The state was divided into electoral districts, each with a population of roughly 40,000. A General election was held for 75 seats in September 1951. Jammu's Hindu Nationalist Party, the Praja Parishad, which protested the limited integration of the state into the Indian union, boycotted the election. Consequently, all 75 seats were won without contest by the National Conference, a party with only a limited mass base in Jammu and its top leadership exclusively drawn from the Kashmir region. Through an amendment of the 1939 constitution, the

constituent assembly was awarded the powers to act as the legislative assembly. This amendment not only outlined the principles of parliamentary government and ministerial responsibility for the new interim government, it also accepted the constitutional liaison with the Indian union. Thus, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was brought into the territorial jurisdiction of the Indian state. The first direct election to six Lok Sabha seats in the state of Jammu and Kashmir took place in 1967, integrating politically the citizens of the state into the Indian state. Prior to that, these seats had been filled by nominations.

The Jammu and Kashmir constituent assembly approved the state's new constitution on November 17, 1956 and it was officially promulgated on January 26, 1957. Its special features included: provisions with regard to the citizenship of the people of Kashmir and their classification into a special category of 'Permanent Residents'; the Directive Principles of State Policy outlining the socialist agenda of the New Kashmir Manifesto of the National Conference Party; and a parliamentary system of government, with its elected head, Sadar-Riyasat, a Permanent Resident of the state. The constitution determined that the legislative assembly be composed of 100 members chosen through direct election based on universal adult franchise. Out of these 100 seats, 25 were reserved for the territories of the state under the 'occupation of Pakistan' (known as Azad Kashmir).

The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir retained the state-subject rules as formulated by the Maharaja in formulating the criteria for citizenship in the state. The citizens of the state are 'all those people who were born and residing in the territories of the state, when it was founded by the Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846, the people who settled in the state later but before 1885, the people who settled in the state under special permission before 1911, and the people who took permanent residence in the state and acquired immovable property under the "Ijazat Nama Rules" before May 14, 1944'.[3] The constituent assembly made a single modification pertaining to the nomenclature of these principles and to the extension of Indian citizenship rights to the state citizens: state-subjects were reclassified into a 'uniform class of Permanent Residents'. The constituent assembly's Committee on Fundamental Rights and Citizenship provided the rationale for this change. 'The State having acceded to the union of India, every subject and every person having his domicile in the state is a citizen of India under the provision of the Constitution of India'.[4] The restriction of state citizenship exclusively to the residents of Kashmir did not come as a surprise to the Indian leadership.

This provision was one of seven points of agreement between the Indian and Kashmiri leadership, arrived at in the Delhi Agreement of 1952. These citizenship provisions were closely guarded by the Kashmiri leadership so that non-residents were disallowed to seek employment, to buy property, and to participate in elections. Initially, the constitution required the state to conduct its own elections. However, in October 1959, the constitution was amended in accordance with the Presidential Order of 1959 by virtue of which the provisions of the Indian constitution relating to the conduct and control of elections to the two houses of the state legislature were extended to the state and vested in the Election Commission of India the power of conducting and controlling elections. Although this ushered a continuing slow and steady integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian polity, the state remained protective of its citizenship requirements—an essential ingredient in the strengthening of Kashmiri identity, particularly among the Valley's predominantly Muslim community.

Integrative Years, Patronage Politics, and Restricted Public Arena

On August 8, 1953, Sheikh Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, was dismissed and arrested on the orders of the Indian government. In reaction to the agitation against the special status of the state, led by Hindu nationalists in Jammu and supported by the national Bharatiya Jan Sangh Party, Abdullah had seriously begun to consider four different alternative solutions to the Kashmir problem between India and Pakistan: a plebiscite with the option of independence for Kashmir; independence for the whole state; independence of the state with joint control by India and Pakistan over foreign affairs; and the Dixon plan for partitioning the state. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed formed the new government, and thus began the deliberate long-term process of integrating the state of Jammu and Kashmir with India, with the approval of the state legislature and through amendments to the state constitution. However, the distinctive characteristic of this integrative process was that the symbolic component of Kashmiri identity in the constitutional provision of Article 370 and the citizenship requirements as set out in the Permanent Resident clause were recognized as sacrosanct, thus generating a framework of Kashmiri politics whereby electoral politics and identity issues emerged and remained as two

distinct domains which converged or diverged depending upon a certain combination of forces.

Three prominent chief ministers of the state of Jammu and Kashmir during this period, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, G. M. Sadiq, and Mir Kasim, enthusiastically supported the state's continued association with India by seeking the legislative assembly's approval of the extension of several central acts to the state and the application of various entries in the union and concurrent lists of the Indian constitution.[5] Both Sadiq and Mir Kasim were to stretch this integration further by renaming the ruling National Conference Party as the Indian National Congress and expressing their intent to 'join the mainstream of national political life'. Yet, these gestures of integration were carefully counter-balanced by the regional leadership's strong reiteration of the distinctness of Kashmir and consequently its special constitutional status within the Indian federation. Both Bakshi and Sadiq scrupulously avoided any involvement with mainstream Indian politics and carefully navigated the contradictions and tensions between formal and informal nationalisms through the usage of widespread patronage politics and the denial of public space to dissidents in the electoral arena. The Indian leadership reciprocated and tactfully refrained from interfering in state politics and reassured the state of its special constitutional status. During the climatic point of the integrative era, Indian Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan, declared on December 6, 1968, in the Lok Sabha that despite the identical destinies of both Kashmir and India, it was not in the interest of anyone to abolish Article 370 which had served as a special link between the Indian constitution and the Kashmir state.

In the first three sets of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly in 1957, 1962, and 1967 (see Table 12.1), one can discern an association between the success of patronage politics and the hegemony of the ruling party, particularly in the Valley. In 1957, while all 40 Kashmir region seats to the assembly were won by the National Conference, only eight seats were contested by 17 candidates. In 1962, once more the Valley saw no contest for 32 of its seats. This implicit widespread support for the Bakshi government was undoubtedly due to its widespread patronage network, the institutionalization of which was facilitated by generous central assistance. Rampant corruption determined admissions to medical and engineering colleges, entrance to the public administration, and promotions and transfers within public institutions. Free education and health services were made accessible to the population, but were taken advantage of largely by the middle and

Table 12.1: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections, 1957–1996

1957	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*Pr. Parishad*	*Ind./Others*	*No Contest*
Kashmir	40	40	–	–	32
Jammu	30	24	5	1	6
Ladakh	2	2	–	–	2
Total	72	66	5	1	40

1962	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*Pr. Parishad*	*Ind./ Others*	*No Contest*
Kashmir	43	41	–	2	32
Ladakh	2	2	–	–	1
Jammu	30	26	4	–	1
Total	75	69	4	2	34

1967	*Total Seats*	*INC*	*NC*	*Jan Sangh*	*Ind./ Others*	*No Contest*
Kashmir	42	33	7	–	2	21
Ladakh	2	1	–	–	1	–
Jammu	31	27	1	3	–	1
Total	75	61	8	3	3	22

1972	*Total Seats*	*INC*	*Jamaat-i-Isl.*	*Jan Sangh*	*Ind./ Others*	*No Contest*
Kashmir	42	27	5	–	9	3
Ladakh	2	2	–	–	–	1
Jammu	31	28	–	3	–	–
Total	75	57	5	3	9	42

1977	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*INC*	*Gambit-i-Isl.*	*JP*	*Ind./ Others*
Kashmir	42	39	–	1	2	–
Ladakh	2	1	1	–	–	–
Jammu	31	7	10	–	12	3
Total	75	47	11	1	14	3

1983	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*INC*	*J&KPC*	*JP*	*Ind./ Others*
Kashmir	42	39	1	1	–	–
Ladakh	2	1	1	–	–	–
Jammu	31	7	23	–	–	2
Total	75	47	25	1	–	2

Table 12.1 continued

Table 12.1 continued

1987	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*INC*	*BJP*	*MUF*	*Ind./ Others*
Kashmir	43	33	5	–	4	–
Ladakh	2	1	1	–	–	–
Jammu	31	6	20	2	–	3
Total	75	40	26	2	4	3

1996	*Total Seats*	*NC*	*INC*	*JD*	*BJP*	*JKP*	*BSP*	*Ind./ Others*
Kashmir	46	40	2	1	–	–	–	3
Ladakh	4	3	1	–	–	–	–	–
Jammu	35	14	4	4	8	1	3	1
Total	85	57	7	5	8	1	3	4

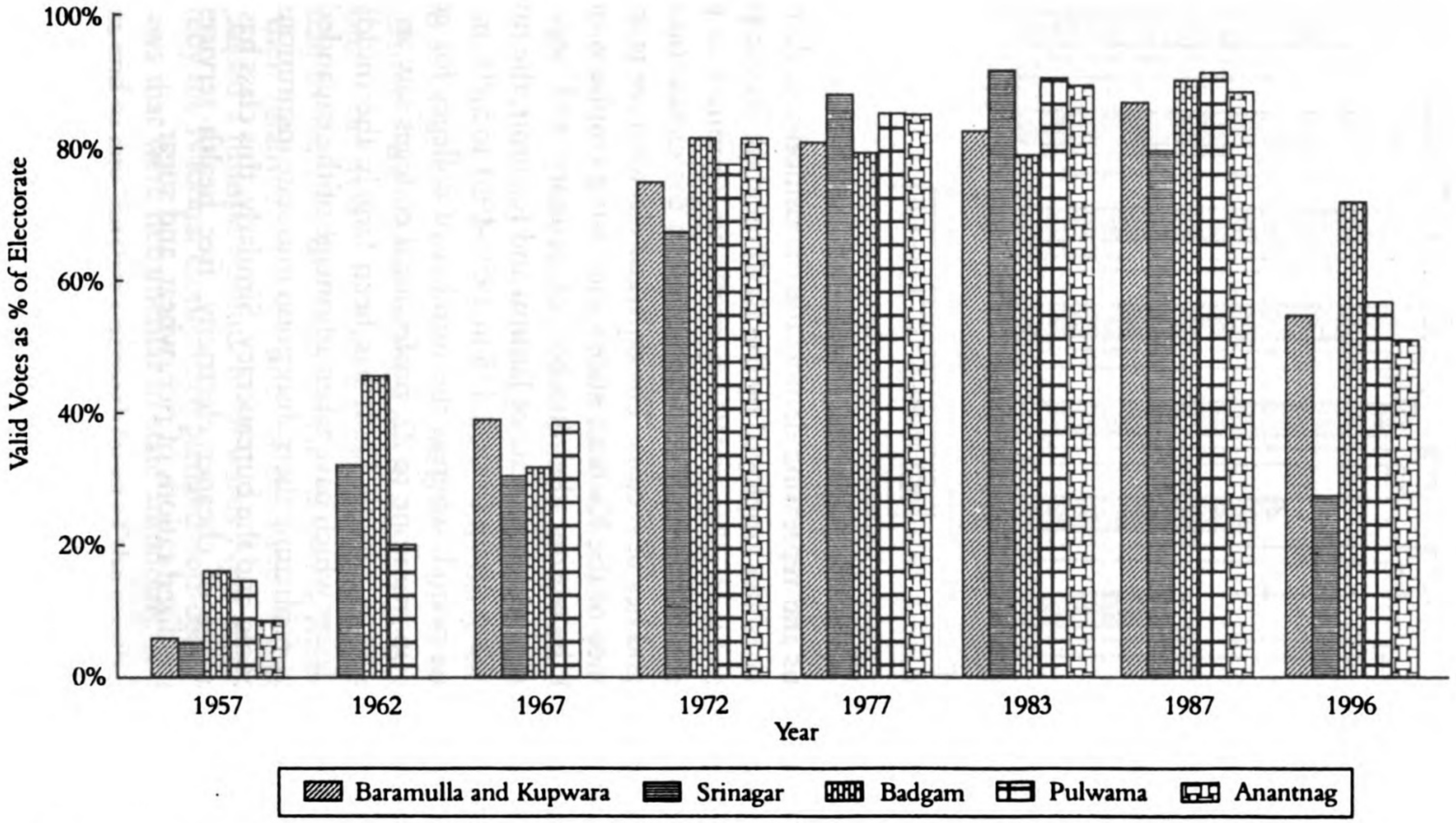
Source: Government of Jammu & Kashmir, *People's Verdict* (Department of Information and Public Relations, 1996).

upper-middle classes. Distribution of rice and wheat was made available to the population of the state on a ration basis, at 40 paisa a kilo, about one-third the market price. In the 1967 election while the number of uncontested seats fell to 21, there still remained a large body of the electorate in the Valley who did not participate in the electoral process. The contest for the other 21 seats in the Valley was due to divisions amongst the senior ranks of the National Conference. In 1964, Sadiq, the new chief minister (a vocal opponent of Bakshi who had earlier broken away from the National Conference and who had unsuccessfully contested the 1962 election under a newly created party, the Democratic National Conference) renamed the party the Indian National Congress. Despite Sadiq's commitment to an honest and clean regime, the patronage system continued to flourish. Sadiq's intensified integration of the Kashmir state with India provided Bakshi with the opportunity to revive the National Conference Party, with the result that, for the first time, the population of the Valley was mobilized by different parties. In 1967, the Kashmir region voted for nine candidates from opposition parties—seven National Conference and two independents—thus ushering in a new period of electoral competition and contest. The revived National Conference remained marginal and was finally dissolved in 1972 and merged into the Indian National Congress.

The 1972 election marks the beginning of a new era. In the assembly election, only three Valley seats were uncontested. For the first time, the Kashmiri population was mobilized and given an opportunity to participate in the political process. This reflected in a large voter turnout of 66 percent. (This trend was to continue till the beginning of political insurgency in 1989. Voter turnout in 1977, 1983, and 1987 was respectively 74, 76.1, and 76.3 percent. see Figure 12.1.) Though the ruling party was able to maintain its hegemony over Kashmiri politics through the continuation of patronage jobs, dissident groups in the Valley were nevertheless able to insert the issues of identity, distinctness of Kashmir, and its right to plebiscite within the electoral domain. After initially concentrating on building its political organization through the establishment of madrasas and a network of social welfare agencies, Jamaat-e-Islami (one of the three groups in the Valley demanding Kashmir's right to hold a referendum to determine its political future) contested its first election, winning five seats. Independent candidates, belonging to the banned Plebiscite Front,[6] won nine seats. The institutionalization efforts of the Jamaat-e-Islami were to pay off later when the Jamaat's initial mobilization of the Valley's population within an electoral context was transformed into its successful strategy of seeking support for its demands for secession. At present, the Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the leading members of the pro-*azadi* Hurriyat party.

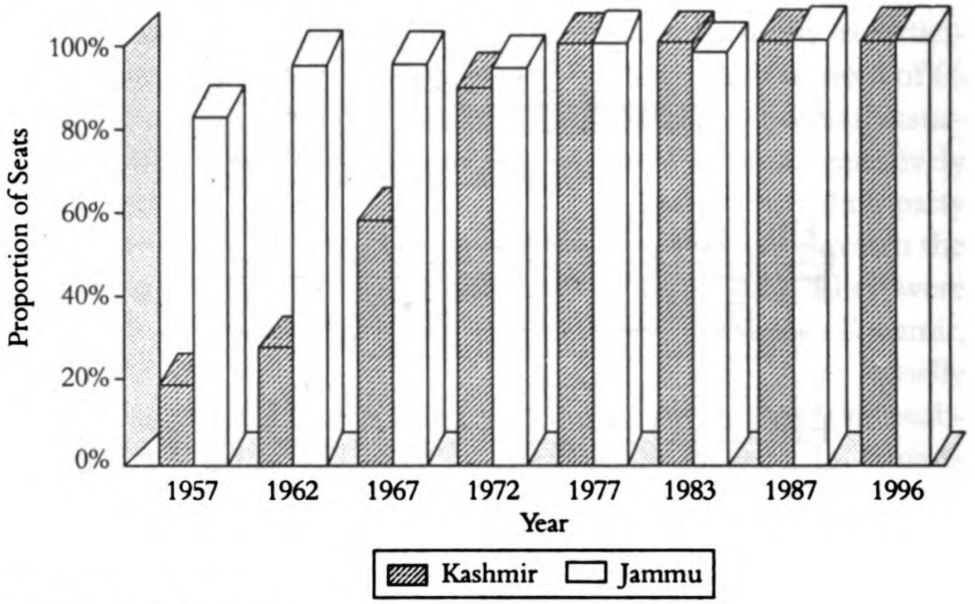
The 1972 active electoral arena where 186 contestants competed for 39 seats (as compared to 17 contestants for eight seats in 1957 and 24 contestants for 11 seats in 1962) owed as much to the aspiring leaders' need to enter the political arena enabling them to distribute patronage goods as to the mobilized population who were recipients of rapidly increasing benefits emanating from the enhanced social welfare sector (see Table 12.1 and Figure 12.2). Political competition in the electoral arena is thus based on an inequality of opportunities where the allocation of resources is determined by who occupies political office, particularly at the ministerial level. The result is that though it is in the interest of the ruling party to keep oppositional and dissident forces out of the competitive electoral arena (thus we see continuous strategies of democratic repression and a one party regime in the Valley), it is imperative that the competitors for political power in a democratic system maintain a semblance of legitimacy. The legitimacy requirement pushes the political leadership in two directions. In the first place, it coerces the participation of actors with no incentives through a variety of means such as buying their votes or promising them jobs in the public sector.

Figure 12.1: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Voter Participation, 1957–1996



Source: Government of Jammu & Kashmir, *People's Verdict* (Department of Information and Public Relations, 1996).

Figure 12.2: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Contested Seats, 1957–1996



Source: Same as Figure 12.1.

Rigging elections and repressing democratic opposition are, therefore, obvious corollary tactics employed by the Kashmir state. In the second place, the political leadership constantly works to legitimize its power base, and this is fundamentally achieved through the expansion of the social, welfare, and health sectors. The enlarged electoral arena in 1972 was a consequence of the Kashmir state's increasing emphasis on free education, and increasing the number of primary and secondary schools, hospitals, etc. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the number of primary schools went up from, 1,115 in 1950–1951 to 5,706 in 1972. During the same period, whereas the number of colleges for general education went up from one to 22, professional colleges saw an exponential increase from one to 11. It has been largely the middle and upper-middle classes which have taken advantage of the expanded educational facilities, facilitating their absorption into state institutions such as hospitals, schools, and the bureaucracy. Similarly, this class has taken the most advantage of cheaper electricity, free health services, and government-subsidized rations of rice, wheat, and sugar.

Conflation of Identity Issues with Electoral Politics

The 1975 Kashmir Accord between Sheikh Abdullah and India's prime minister Indira Gandhi ushered in a new era in Kashmir politics. The

ruling majority party of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, the Indian National Congress, unanimously elected Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the Plebiscite Front, as its leader and pledged its support to him and his new ministry. As a first assertion of his government's independence from the integrationist policies of previous governments, he refused to join the Congress Party. He was elected to the assembly as an independent candidate. He convened a general meeting of the Plebiscite Front where he convinced the delegates to dissolve the party and merge with the revived National Conference. Sheikh Abdullah retained his chief ministership without a party base in the assembly until the 1977 election, which gave his party, the National Conference, a solid majority—47 out of 75 seats.

Although the changed geopolitical situation in the South Asia region in the early 1970s made it difficult for Sheikh Abdullah to negotiate with the Indian leadership a reversal of the latter's integrationist policies and to revert to the pre-1953 constitutional position (whereby the Indian government exercised only the limited powers of foreign affairs, communication, and currency with regard to the governance of the Jammu and Kashmir state), after assuming power, he set in motion a new political agenda. This revolved around two themes: reassertion of Kashmir's autonomy and the de-linking of Kashmir from mainstream national politics. During election rallies in 1977, Sheikh Abdullah declared that the Kashmiri people would not hesitate to secede from India unless the latter recognized its distinctness and reversed several integrationist constitutional amendments to Article 370. As a consequence of Mrs Gandhi's increasing intervention in state policies, Sheikh Abdullah brought the identity issues into the forefront. He openly began to suggest the possibility of integrating the two partitioned parts of Kashmir into an independent state. At the 1981 annual meeting of the National Conference, he called upon the governments of India and Pakistan to liberalize their visa policies, allowing Kashmiri residents to visit their relatives on both sides of the Line of Control. The party also passed a historic resolution, 'Towards New Kashmir Autonomy', whereby the National Conference pledged non-cooperation with central laws that were detrimental to state autonomy. It also promised to put an end to any 'further encroachment of the state's right to retain its sovereign right to be ruled by its own constitution and to retain state autonomy' for the operation of a democratic society.[7] Sheikh Abdullah's success in legislating the Resettlement Bill was the climactic point in the assertion of the identity agenda for the Kashmir Valley. The

Resettlement Bill was to allow settled refugees from the state of Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to return freely to the state.

Sheikh Abdullah's legitimization of the secessionist party, the Plebiscite Front, and the revival of the autonomy agenda made the Hindus both within the Valley and in the Jammu region extremely uncomfortable, setting in motion a wave of Hindu protests. The 1977 election set a new trend of sharp religious–regional polarization of assembly seats, which continued until the 1987 election that preceded the political insurgency in the Valley. The Congress Party became the principal channel of discontent for the Hindu population, particularly from the Jammu region, which had replaced the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Jan Sangh with a secularly oriented party. Mrs Gandhi, who intervened directly in the 1977 state election, capitalized on Jammu's fears of Kashmiri demands for autonomy and the secessionist stance of the Abdullah government. Her speeches in the Jammu region largely addressed the problems of minorities. The Congress Party was unable to win a single seat in the Valley, but it won 10 seats in Jammu and one in Ladakh. Consequently, both the Jammu and Hindu votes became associated with the Congress Party. The National Conference came to represent the identity-based politics in the Valley (the demands of autonomy from the Indian state to maintain Kashmiri distinctness), thus conflating identity issues with elections (see Table 12.1).

Interestingly, the content of these identity issues was carefully constructed by Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference Party. By denying a public space to the extremists, both Islamic irredentist members of Jamaat-e-Islami and secessionist backers of the dissolved Plebiscite Front, Abdullah maintained a strong popular base by successfully pursuing the legitimacy formula of attaching prominence to the goal of Kashmir autonomy within the context of a confederal Indian polity. While those members of the Plebiscite Front who refused to join the revived National Conference Party in 1975 and remained committed to the cause of self-determination were deprived of a political apparatus, the Jamaat-e-Islami was kept under control by Abdullah through banning its various activities as well as closing its network of madrasas. It is only after the death of Sheikh Abdullah that the Jamaat was able to provide effective leadership to the oppositional forces. In the 1983 assembly election, Jamaat backed the Muslim United Front, an 11-party oppositional alliance which won four seats and secured 32 percent of the popular vote. In the post-Sheikh period, the crystallization and maturation of the secessionist/irredentist forces within the Valley owed much,

on the one hand, to the politically integrative activities of Mrs Gandhi's central government into which the post-Sheikh state leadership had inadvertently been drawn and, on the other hand, to the breakdown of the political and economic frameworks within which patronage politics had flourished in the state. Assisted by some state leadership blunders, particularly of the new chief minister Farooq Abdullah, increased central intervention (first by creating a rift within the legislative National Conference Party in 1984 and supporting the dissident leader and government of Farooq Abdullah's brother-in-law, G.M. Shah, then by imposing president's rule after communal riots broke out in the Valley, and finally by bringing Farooq back into power through the unpopular 1987 National Conference–Congress Accord) solidified the secessionist movement, encouraged an active mass participation against India, intensified regional differences, and drove a wedge between the two religious communities of the Valley.

Elections and Political Insurgency

A massively public-supported secessionist movement accompanied by political insurgency began in the Valley in 1989. It saw the transformation of Kashmiri demands for autonomy and a reversal to the pre-1953 constitutional position into an insistence upon *azadi* from the Indian state. Secessionist groups such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, seeking the reunification of Kashmir, and irredentist groups such as the Hezbul Mujahideen, demanding an Islamic state and unification with Pakistan, joined forces in demanding the Kashmiris' right to hold a plebiscite in the state to determine its political and constitutional status. The National Conference government's ability to govern declined rapidly as widespread activism outside legal–political channels became the norm rather than the exception. One of the major objectives of the secessionist/nationalist groups was to render state nationalism impotent. This goal was realized through the twin strategies of undermining the hegemony of the National Conference and of short-circuiting the electoral process. For years, the Indian state had presented in the arena of international public opinion the image of the Valley population's voluntary and large-scale participation in local and national elections as evidence of the population's support for a continued association with India. While demanding the democratic right of self-determination, the secessionist organizations successfully challenged the democratic nature of the ruling party.

These groups' most effective weapon to break the National Conference's hegemony of power turned out to be their ultimatum to the party's membership in early August 1989 to declare their public disassociation from the party. The Kashmir daily, *Aftab*, began to carry a special column, *Izhar-e-Lataluqee* (declaration of disassociation), listing the names of National Conference functionaries. Due as much to fear of retaliation by militant groups as to sympathy with the cause for *azadi*, a large number of members officially declared their voluntary withdrawal from the party. The militant groups also ensured that the Valley population did not participate in three Lok Sabha elections. The Valley's population was urged and intimidated into abstaining en masse from the electoral process. In the event, the National Conference candidate from Srinagar constituency was elected unopposed, while Baramulla and Anantnag saw an insignificant voter turnout. The official figures estimated the turnout at 5.3 percent in Baramulla and 4.5 percent in Anantnag, although it is widely believed that the true figure is probably less than 2 percent in both constituencies. Despite stern warnings from the state government, a majority of polling officers refused to perform their official duties at polling stations and returned their work orders. Several school buildings, generally used as polling stations, were set on fire by the militants.

The secessionist groups accomplished their objectives of de-legitimizing the Indian claim of the Kashmiri population's support for the democratic Indian state and of disassociating formal from informal nationalism. Contradictions between state and popular nationalism were resolved in favor of popular nationalism, where identity issues became the focal point for uniting the masses in the cause of *azadi*. The Kashmir region came largely under the control of literally dozens of secessionist groups. The two most prominent among these, espousing respectively secessionist and irredentist claims, were the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, which demanded unification of Kashmir currently under Indian and Pakistani jurisdictions into an independent state, and the Hezbul Mujahideen, which demanded an Islamic state and association with Pakistan. To deal with what had become an entrenched 'gun culture' in the Valley, the Indian state first brought the state under president's rule. Soon thereafter, it began the process of dealing militarily with the armed militants (which included the home grown, those trained in Pakistan, and the so-called 'guest militants' from Islamic countries), maintained the daily administrative structures in the Valley, including the operation of schools and hospitals, and increased the central government's financial support to the state to deal

with issues of unemployment and damaged property resulting from militant violence.

These measures were complemented by the Indian state's keen desire to lay the foundation for the initiation of the electoral process. In 1996, following the successful example of Punjab, both parliamentary and assembly elections were conducted in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. All secessionist/nationalist groups boycotted the elections on the basis of their claim that their movement was directed toward determining the status of the Kashmir state and not the nature of the government. Despite their call to the public not to participate in the electoral process, voter turnout in the Valley was respectable. Official sources attributed this voter turnout to the local population's weariness with the movement and the violence that came in its wake. This was undoubtedly one of the major reasons behind the limited participation of the Valley's population in the political process, but other factors contributed as importantly to making the participation of the population in the electoral process an essentially pragmatic choice. These include the declining military power of the JKLF as Pakistan withdrew its military support, and the discomfort of the population with the Jihad approach of the Hezbul Mujahideen (particularly of the so-called 'guest militants'). The Kashmiri population has unequivocally condemned the kidnapping of foreign tourists by Al-Farhan, and subsequent gruesome beheadings as well as mass killings of Hindu villagers. In addition, president's rule in the state saw the transfer of local political power to bureaucrats operating directly under the governor of the state.

In the absence of closure to the secessionist movement, it was in the interest of the population to redirect the distribution of patronage resources through regional politicians rather than remote bureaucrats. I saw dramatic evidence of this during a visit to Kashmir immediately after the assembly election in the form of huge lines in the secretariat of ordinary citizens, men and women, seeking access to decision-makers. The army had been replaced by Farooq's new security forces as gatekeepers to the secretariat where the bureaucrats' power to allocate resources, which they had come to monopolize under president's rule, had been sharply curbed by politicians who now directed the bureaucrats regarding the distribution of patronage. The Valley's Muslim population has, in effect, reverted to a familiar state of politics in the Valley where electoral participation and *azadi* are two distinct domains: participation in the political process is linked to obtaining economic and political goods, while *azadi* demands relate to the issue of distinct identity.

The data from the 1996 assembly election reveals certain interesting results. (For a historical picture of assembly elections in all six districts in Kashmir, see Tables 12.2, 12.3, and 12.4.) Voter turnout in the Kashmir region was the lowest (43.6 percent) since 1972, when 100 percent of the assembly seats were contested.[8] Correlating voter turnout data with support for the winning National Conference Party, the data clearly suggests that in five out of six districts of the Kashmir region—Kupwara, Baramulla, Badgam, Pulwama, and Anantnag—although the voter turnout ranged between 45.4 percent (Anantnag) and 62.9 percent (Badgam), support for the National Conference was weak. In other words, not only was the participation of the Valley's population in the electoral process limited, but half or more than half of the people voted for either the Indian National Congress or the Janata Dal. In sharp contrast, in Srinagar district, where the voter turnout was the lowest (23.7 percent), more than 70 percent voted for the National Conference. This suggests two conclusions: (*a*) in Srinagar district, which has been the main breeding ground for political insurgency, the dissidents stayed home and boycotted the assembly election while it was mostly supporters of the National Conference (a small minority of the electorate) who participated in the election; or (*b*) in all other five districts the voters were split in their support for the National Conference and two other major parties, with the National Conference receiving 22.3 percent of votes in the Valley (see Figure 12.3). Similarly, the leader of the National Conference, Farooq Abdullah, experienced a fall in popularity. In his constituency, Ganderbal, the voter turnout was 50.8 percent and he won his seat with 47.2 percent of the vote, indicating tepid support for the chief minister for the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The

Table 12.2: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Contested Seats as a Percent of Total Seats, 1957–1996

	1957	*1962*	*1967*	*1972*	*1977*	*1983*	*1987*	*1996*
Baram. & Kupwara	14.3	21.4	61.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Srinagar	11.1	44.4	77.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Badgam	40.0	60.0	60.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Pulwama	20.0	20.0	60.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Anantnag	20.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Kashmir Total	18.6	25.6	50.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 12.1.

comparable figures for Farooq's earlier victories were 84.9 percent of the vote with a 76.1 percent turnout in 1983, and 81.7 percent of the vote with a 76.3 percent turnout in 1987 (see Figure 12.4).

Table 12.3: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Valid Votes as a Percent of Electorate, 1957–1996

	1957	*1962*	*1967*	*1972*	*1977*	*1983*	*1987*	*1996*
Baram. & Kupwara	5.4	0.0	34.0	65.8	71.4	72.4	76.3	48.1
Srinagar	4.8	28.2	26.9	59.2	77.8	80.4	70.1	23.7
Badgam	14.6	39.4	28.1	71.4	70.1	68.9	79.8	62.9
Pulwama	13.1	17.3	33.9	67.5	75.2	79.5	80.8	49.9
Anantnag	7.8	0.0	0.0	70.9	75.1	78.5	78.9	45.4
Kashmir Total	7.9	12.5	23.8	66.0	74.0	76.1	76.3	43.6

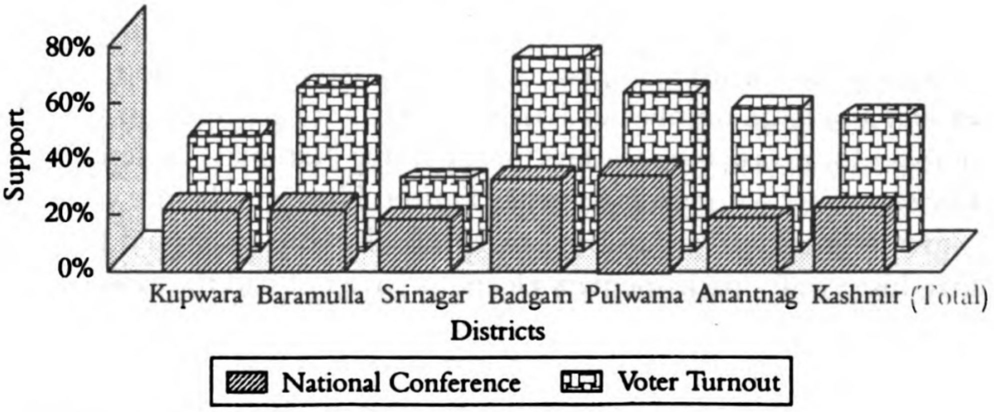
Source: Same as Table 12.1.

Table 12.4: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Average Voter Turnout per Contested Seat, 1957–1996

	1957	*1962*	*1967*	*1972*	*1977*	*1983*	*1987*	*1996*
Kashmir	41.6	74.1	47.4	66.0	74.0	76.1	76.3	43.6
Jammu	78.9	69.7	61.6	61.5	54.9	64.3	68.5	60.4
Ladakh	NA	90.0	73.7	75.5	66.1	70.0	65.9	68.9
J&K State	69.8	71.3	56.4	64.2	65.9	70.8	72.7	52.3

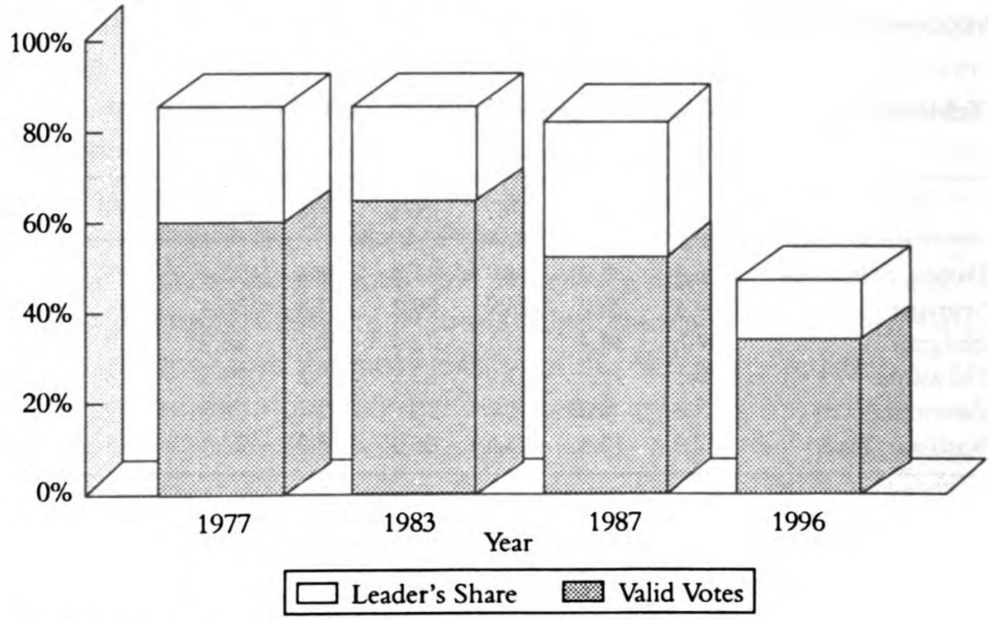
Source: Same as Table 12.1.

Figure 12.3: 1996 Assembly Election: Voter Turnout and National Conference Support, Kashmir Distrcits



Source: Same as Figure 12.1.

Figure 12.4: Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections: Leader's Share and Valid Votes, Ganderbal Constituency, 1977–1996.



Source: Same as Figure 12.1.

Lok Sabha Election of 1998

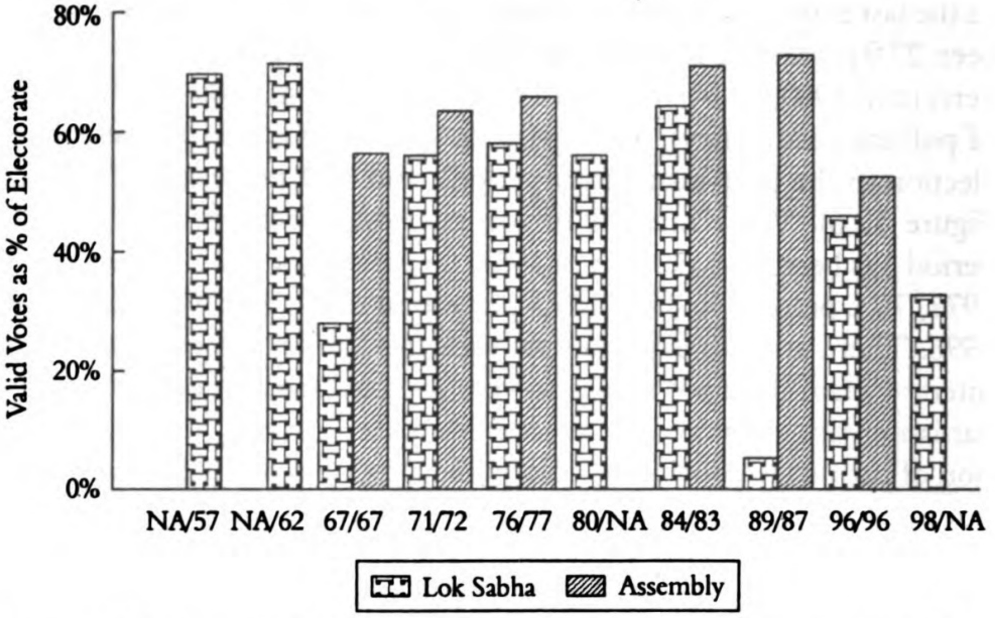
Along with the rest of the country, Jammu and Kashmir went to the polls in 1998 to elect six representatives (three from the Valley, two from the Jammu region, and one from Ladakh) to the 12th Lok Sabha. These elections were held in four phases—February 16, 1998 for Jammu, February 28 and March 7, 1998 for Kashmir, and June 21, 1998 for Ladakh. Unlike the 1996 election, no poll officials were requisitioned from outside the state. The results of the 1998 parliamentary election in the three constituencies of the Valley (Baramulla, Srinagar, and Anantnag) confirm the picture of the 1997 assembly election sketched earlier, as a large number of Kashmiris did not participate in the elections and support among voters for the ruling National Conference was low compared with pre-insurgency figures. However, before venturing into a political analysis of the Lok Sabha elections, it should be noted that, historically, parliamentary elections have not had the same significance for the Valley population as elections to the regional assembly.

The first direct election to six Lok Sabha seats in the state of Jammu and Kashmir took place in 1967. Prior to that, these seats had been filled by nominations. Since 1967, the voter turnout in the Kashmir region

has been consistently lower than in assembly elections (see Figure 12.5). In the last eight Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout in the Valley has been 27.9 percent in 1967, 56.5 percent in 1971, 58.1 percent in 1976, 56 percent in 1980, 64.6 percent in 1984, 5.2 percent in 1989 (the first year of political insurgency), 45.95 percent in 1996 (the first parliamentary election in the post-insurgency period), and 33.1 percent in 1998 (see Figure 12.6). Voter turnout in the assembly elections for the same period has been 47.4 percent in 1967, 66 percent in 1972, 74 percent in 1977, 76.1 percent in 1983, 76.3 percent in 1987, and 43.6 percent in 1996. There are two explanations for the population's relative lack of interest when the time comes to vote for Lok Sabha candidates. First, parliamentary elections are directly connected neither to the distribution of patronage goods, particularly the allocation of bureaucratic jobs, nor to demands for *azadi* (except in the 1989 election when the militant secessionists/nationalists successfully attempted to disassociate participation in elections from Kashmiri Muslims' support for the Indian state, producing a 5.2 percent voter turnout in the Valley).

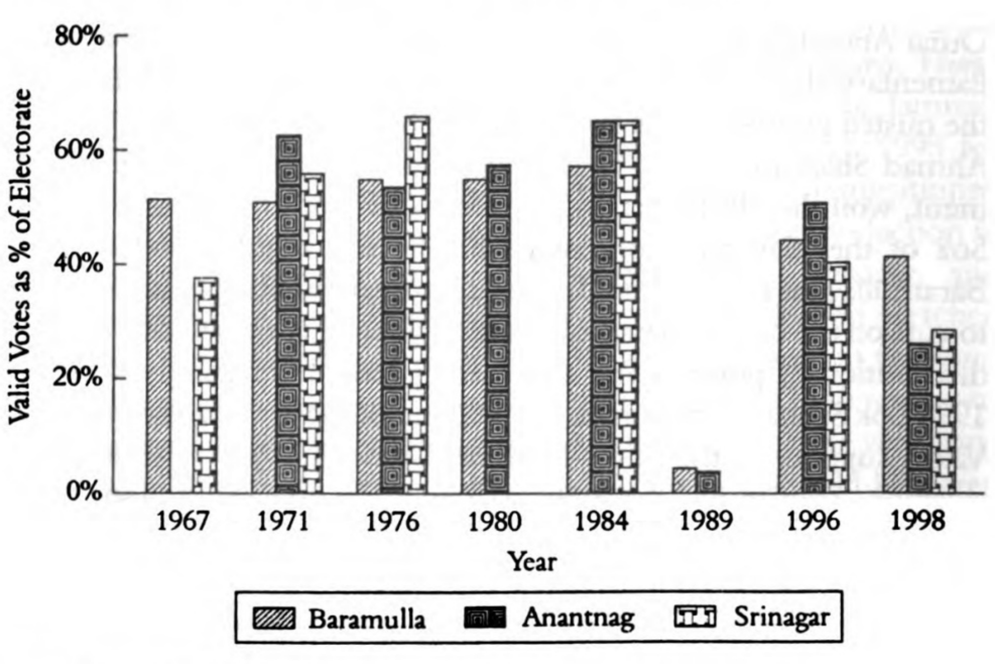
Second, parliamentary elections are a venue for the ruling party of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to allocate seats either to those high-profile candidates whom it intends to introduce to the Kashmiri political arena or those who could be potentially threatening to the leadership of the Valley. On the one hand, Farooq Abdullah, his mother (Sheikh Abdullah's wife) Akbar Jahan Begum, and most recently Farooq's son, Omar Abdullah, were all introduced to the state political scene via parliamentary elections. On the other hand, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the ousted premier of the state, won the Srinagar seat in 1967; Shamim Ahmad Shamim, a vocal independent journalist critic of the government, won the 1971 election from Srinagar; and the popular Saifudin Soz of the National Conference has been a regular winner of the Baramulla seat since 1980. Under either scenario, the population tends to vote on the basis of personality rather than on issues of identity or the distribution of political and economic goods. Interestingly, while the 1998 Lok Sabha election evinced the trend of lower voter turnout in the Valley, support for the ruling National Conference party declined considerably, confirming the 1997 assembly election results (see Figure 12.5). This further points to the weak basis for the confidence in the prospects for reactivating civil society voiced by policy-makers and the political leadership of both India and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Both the National Conference and its leader, Farooq Abdullah, remain largely discredited in the Valley and do not enjoy the confidence of the

Figure 12.5: Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections: Voter Participation



Sources: 1. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, ***People's Verdict*** (Department of Information and Public Relations, 1996).
2. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, ***Lok Sabha Elections 1998*** (Department of Information and Public Relations, 1998).

Figure 12.6: Lok Sabha Elections: Voter Participation, 1967–1998



Source: Same as Figure 12.5.

people, as the following brief discussion of three parliamentary constituencies—Baramulla, Srinagar, and Anantnag—will show.

Baramulla parliamentary constituency, with a total electorate of 761,265 in 1998, consists of two districts—Baramulla and Kupwara. According to the 1981 Census, the population of both Baramulla and Kupwara districts is largely rural, with agricultural cultivation by far the dominant occupation. According to the agricultural census conducted in 1991, the average holding size is 0.64 hectares in both districts, as compared to the state average of 0.83 hectares. Baramulla's population is 96.5 percent Muslim, 2 percent Hindu, and 1.5 percent Sikh and, similarly, Kupwara's is 97 percent Muslim, 2 percent Hindu, and 0.5 percent Sikh. Since 1967, the National Conference has consistently won the Baramulla seat, except in 1996 when it did not participate in the parliamentary election. Since the 1984 election, voter turnout has ranged between 49 percent and 59 percent, but declined to 46.6 percent in 1996, and fell further to 41.8 percent in 1998. While Saifudin Soz received 70 percent of the votes in 1984, that endorsement dwindled to 41 percent in 1998, as independent candidate Muzaffar Hussain Beg received 29 percent of the vote and the remaining 30 percent was shared largely by Awami League and Congress Party candidates with a very small proportion going to 25 other, mostly independent, candidates. Repeating its poor showing with the 1996 assembly vote, the National Conference was able to garner the support of only 17.2 percent of the total electorate in 1998, compared to 41.3 percent in 1984 (see Table 12.5).

Similar results emerged in the Srinagar parliamentary constituency, which is composed of the districts of Srinagar (10 constituencies) and

Table 12.5: Lok Sabha Elections: Baramulla, 1967–1998

	Total Electorate	*Valid Votes*	*Voter Participation %*	*Winning Votes*	*Winning Share %*
1967	367400	183023	49.8	101769	55.6
1971	370345	182378	49.2	93041	51.0
1976	453765	247424	54.5	147222	59.5
1980	489040	264232	54.0	178533	67.6
1984	571205	336293	58.9	234357	69.7
1989	698284	37466	5.4	35139	93.8
1996	704601	328688	46.6	101331	30.8
1998	761265	318415	41.8	130574	41.0

Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir, *Lok Sabha Elections 1998* (Department of Information and Public Relations, 1998).

Badgam (five constituencies). Srinagar district is the exception among the Valley's districts with a population that is 80 percent urban, while Badgam district is more typical with an 86 percent rural population and an average land holding of 0.57 hectares. According to the 1981 Census, Srinagar district's population was 91 percent Muslim and 8.4 percent Hindu, but since then almost all the Hindu population has migrated to Jammu and the rest of India. In 1981, Badgam's population was 96 percent Muslim and 2.6 percent Hindu. In 1977, Akbar Jahan Begum, Sheikh Abdullah's wife and a National Conference candidate, won the Srinagar parliamentary seat with 68 percent of the votes cast. Farooq, heir to the National Conference Party, was elected unopposed in 1980. In 1998, Farooq's son was elected on a National Conference ticket. Support for Begum Abdullah was 46 percent among the district's electorate and no candidate opposed the candidacy of Farooq. However, in 1998, Omar Abdullah's support amounted to only 16.8 percent of the electorate, given his obtaining 56 percent of the total votes cast and an exceptionally low voter turnout of 30 percent (compared to a 67 percent turnout in both 1977 and 1984). In other words, 70 percent of the electorate stayed home and little more than half of those who voted chose Omar Abdullah (see Table 12.6).

Table 12.6: Lok Sabha Elections: Srinagar, 1967–1998

	Total Electorate	*Valid Votes*	*Voter Participation %*	*Winning Votes*	*Winning Share %*
1967	354364	127068	35.9	59415	46.8
1971	371494	208723	56.2	128948	61.8
1976	461965	310158	67.1	210072	67.7
1980	542741	NA	0.0	NA	NA
1984	611518	411826	67.3	264633	64.3
1989	782590	NA	0.0	NA	NA
1996	786301	321928	40.9	55503	17.2
1998	853183	256490	30.1	144609	56.4

Source: Same as Table 12.5.

In Anantnag constituency, the Congress Party candidate, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, won the 1998 parliamentary seat with 53 percent of the vote (14.9 percent of the electorate), while the National Conference candidate, Mohammed Yousuf Teng, came in second with 30 percent of the vote. At no other time, except in 1996, had the ruling party of

the state been unable to secure the seat. Anantang constituency, composed of Pulwama and Anantnag districts (both with a 90 percent rural and 96 percent Muslim population, with average land holdings of 0.58 hectares), had the lowest voter turnout (28.15 percent) in 1998 in the Valley. In 1980, the National Conference candidate, Ghulam Rasool Kaushik, had received 60 percent of the vote or 35 percent of the electorate, and in 1984, Jahan Begum had received 59 percent of the vote or 39.5 percent of the electorate. It is not difficult to conclude that in 1998 the National Conference's performance was dismal in all three parliamentary constituencies, particularly in Anantnag losing the election to the Congress candidate, and this suggests that the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, enjoys minimal support in the Valley (see Table 12.7).

Table 12.7: Lok Sabha Elections: Anantnag, 1967–1998

	Total Electorate	*Valid Votes*	*Voter Participation %*	*Winning Votes*	*Winning Share %*
1967	390045	NA	0.0	NA	NA
1971	393878	250148	63.5	150827	60.3
1976	471302	248650	52.8	79742	32.1
1980	511132	296047	57.9	179620	60.7
1984	611518	411826	67.3	240973	58.5
1989	736495	36907	5.0	36055	97.7
1996	764670	383861	50.2	120444	31.4
1998	804983	226597	28.1	68444	30.2

Source: Same as Table 12.5.

The data clearly suggests that the Indian government's faith that the electoral process has been successful in curbing the nationalist movement in the Valley is unwarranted (see Table 12.8). The Valley's population supports neither the National Conference nor its leader. During the seven-year insurgency, the Indian government made a conscious choice to support the discredited National Conference and Farooq Abdullah. The election results point out that a limited portion of the Valley's population did make a conscious and pragmatic choice to participate in the political process, but that this participation cannot reasonably be interpreted as implying popular confidence in Farooq or his government. The dissident groups of the Valley do not occupy a public space, though this time of their own volition, but the anti-state

Table 12.8: Lok Sabha Elections: Kashmir Total, 1967–1998

	Total Electorate	*Valid Votes*	*Voter Participation %*	*Winning Votes*	*Winning Share %*
1967	1111809	310091	27.9	161184	52.0
1971	1135717	641249	56.5	372816	58.1
1976	1387032	806232	58.1	437036	54.2
1980	1000172	560279	56.0	358153	63.9
1984	1794241	1159945	64.6	739963	63.8
1989	1434779	74373	5.2	71194	95.7
1996	2255572	1034477	45.9	277278	26.8
1998	2419431	801502	33.1	343627	42.9

Source: Same as Table 12.5.

structures are alive and well even if they remain inaudible. Given the right combination of factors, these inaudible structures could be re-activated.

It is true that, for the present, a certain degree of political order and stability has been reconstituted, but that the national movement and informal nationalism have been squelched is far from being the case. The Indian state needs to rethink its strategy with regard to Kashmir. Indeed, the present hiatus in the *azadi* movement has provided the Indian government with an excellent opportunity to revisit the issue of autonomy and the retention of Article 370, which Farooq has carefully included in his political platform, once again making the identity issue the central theme of the political agenda. However, if the Indian state should fail to operationalize the autonomy structures for Jammu and Kashmir, an almost certain outcome if it should (whether naively or disingenuously) misinterpret the recent elections, then it is likely that a combination of forces will, in the near future, reactivate the Valley's at present inaudible and unmobilized structures of identity-based politics and build up once again a strong momentum for the secessionist movement.

Notes and References

1. Praveen Swami: Frontline: May, 1998
2. This theme is explored in detail in Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay, 'Nation, Identity and the Intervening Role of the State: A Study of the Secessionist Movement in Kashmir', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4, Winter 1996–97, pp 471–97.

3. Mohan Krishan Teng, Ram Krishen Bhat and Santosh Kaul, *Kashmir: Constitutional History and Documents* (New Delhi; Light and Life Publishers, 1977), p. 210.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
5. See Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay, 'Kashmir: The Valley's Political Dynamics', *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1995, p. 89.
6. The Plebiscite Front was formed in 1955 by Mirza Afzal Beg, a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah. The Front's prestige and influence were attributable mostly to its close association with the charismatic Abdullah. Though the Sheikh never aligned himself with the party, he used the Front as his political vehicle.
7. *Asian Recorder*, October 7, 1981, p. 16248.
8. Voter turnout data is defined in two different ways. When the year 1996 is considered by itself, voter turnout is polled votes as a percent of eligible voters. Because polled vote data is not readily available for earlier elections, voter turnout for comparisons across elections is defined as valid votes as a percent of eligible voters.

13

The BJP and Indian Democracy: Elections, Bombs, and Beyond

Pramod K. Kantha[1]

With the series of nuclear explosions in May 1998, India and Pakistan transformed themselves from 'threshold' nuclear powers into nuclear weapon states. India's first nuclear explosion was in 1974. Pakistan started its pursuit of nuclear weapons in the wake of the Indian explosion, but never conducted a test. Both countries have long been known to possess the ability to produce nuclear weapons. While Pakistan's explosions were in reaction to those of India's, the timing of the Indian tests is very questionable. This chapter examines various facets of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition's decision to abandon India's earlier policy of ambivalence on the nuclear question. The central argument is that this important shift in India's policy can be better understood with reference to developments in India's domestic politics. No one can deny the importance of international factors behind India's nuclear pursuit. These international factors however, do not offer a satisfactory explanation for the decision to weaponize the nuclear capability.

India's nuclear decision was far more serious than was generally portrayed. The change was not one of nuances only. Instead, by declaring itself a nuclear weapon power, India plunged into an inevitable nuclear arms race in South Asia. As environmentalist Medha Patkar pointed

out, with its tests India disregarded the principles of international fraternity and peace which have been a legacy from Buddha, Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore, thereby pushing India to take a defensive stance on a number of issues, including Kashmir.[2] In terms of nuclear capabilities, it had to compete not only with Pakistan but also with China. Although catching up even with China's existing nuclear capability appears formidable for India, Beijing indicated that it might review its stand on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the wake of the Indian explosions. The overall impact of the induction of nuclear weapons by New Delhi and Islamabad remains uncertain at this point. What is certain though is the diversion of huge resources to the development of nuclear warheads, missiles, and command and control systems. Moreover, many saw the danger of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan. The following comments by an Indian critic underlines this point:

> The BJP's exercise of nuclear option, therefore, does not change anything, except that having emerged from the closet, India will now have to bear the brunt of international opprobrium and sanctions. Pakistan, too, will have to respond; otherwise, its rulers will be seen to be lacking in spirit. In the process, an entirely avoidable atmosphere of conflict in which China, too, will be drawn in will be created in South Asia.[3]

So, why did the Indian government decide to carry out the explosions at that time? This question received much less attention than it deserved. Moreover, answers to this question may also point to the future dynamics of politics and security in now nuclear South Asia. The Congress initially asked the BJP-led government to spell out the threat that prompted the tests, but stopped short of outright criticism. It backtracked when the BJP demanded to know what explanations the Congress government at the time of India's first nuclear explosion in 1974 had offered. The questions about the rationale for the explosions were raised again by Congress MPs and other opposition members when the Lok Sabha met in the aftermath of the tests. Former Foreign Minister, K. Natwar Singh, while recognizing a national consensus on keeping the nuclear option open, demanded to know what necessitated the resorting to that option. The opposition asked for an explanation of what 'sudden provocation' led to Pokhran II.[4]

India's External Milieu: How Had It Changed?

According to Prime Minister Vajpayee, an atmosphere of distrust in India's relations with China and Pakistan's status as a covert nuclear weapon state led India to carry out its own nuclear tests. On May 1, 1998, just over a week before the explosions on May 11 and 13, India's Defense Minister, George Fernandes, leveled accusations against China of hostile activities. He accused China of building a sophisticated electronic surveillance base in Myanmar's Coco Islands and upgrading airfields in Tibet for the use of supersonic fighters. He described China as posing a military threat to India. He also mentioned the popular perception that China will become the second most powerful nation in the world after the United States.[5] That China is a strategic challenge to India is nothing new. It is also common knowledge that China's vast resources and high economic growth rate combined with its military capability gives it a major power profile. These accusations do not explain how India's security environment underwent a sudden change prompting the exercise of the nuclear option.

As Praful Bidwai pointed out, India's external security milieu has not seen any 'perceptible adverse change' to justify a radical shift in her military posture.[6] Instead, the situation seemed to be getting better as it was in most places with the end of the Cold War. Diplomats of India and Pakistan were continually meeting each other, thereby expanding and strengthening relations between the two countries. India and Pakistan had lived peacefully for the longest period in their history. Within the first 25 years of their existence, they had fought three full-fledged wars (1948, 1965, and 1971). The second 25 years had seen no war at all! Peace had prevailed between the two countries since the signing of the 1972 Shimla Accord, following the Indo-Pak war of 1971. This peace had prevailed without nuclear weapons. Moreover, with India's victory in the 1971 war and the bifurcation of Pakistan, India established its military primacy in the region, which remains unchallenged.

Pakistan's testing of its Ghauri missiles, a North Korean version of the Scud missile, with a range of 1,240 miles on April 6, 1998, though important, could not have changed the balance of power between the two countries. India had already tested its own missiles. In 1994, India successfully completed a flight test of Agni missiles with a range of 1,550 miles. Its Prithvi missiles have a range of 150–200 kilometers.[7]

Even political systems in the two countries were getting more compatible. For the first time in its history, Pakistan enjoyed a democratic

form of governance for over a decade. The regional context had also been changing for the better. The countries of South Asia over the last decade had organized themselves into a regional cooperation framework known as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). SAARC countries were consulting on establishing a free trade zone by the beginning of the new century.

Why then did the Indian leadership chose to isolate itself and be subjected to international opprobrium and sanctions? It was the first time in India's history that sanctions were targeted against it. The tests further deepened the diplomatic isolation that India faced since its refusal in 1996 to sign the CTBT.

China Factor, What Is So New?

Indian authorities focused on a potential threat from China to justify their nuclear thrust. How persuasive was this rationale? True, India is still suffering from the bitter memories of war with China in the 1960s. In addition, China's ever growing international profile in both military and economic terms may be deeply disturbing to India. There is no indication, however, that India is catching up with China in any realm other than population growth. India officially had a population of 954 million in 1997. Between 2035 and 2050, India most likely will surpass China in terms of population.[8] Meanwhile, China's tremendous success in terms of both international trade and investment, despite its poor record on human rights, has enabled it to maintain a high and steady growth rate.

The China factor had not shown any significant change. India and China have maintained peaceful relations since the 1962 war. It is paradoxical that the Vajpayee government raised the Chinese threat. Sino-Indian relations have improved significantly since he visited China as India's foreign minister in 1979, despite opposition to this visit even within the then ruling Janata Party. Following this visit, the two sides resumed high level bilateral contacts and a pilgrimage route to Kailash Mansarovar was opened. Successive governments in India led by the Congress, the Janata Party, and the United Front kept up the efforts to build upon Vajpayee's accomplishments, despite differences over issues such as Afghanistan and Cambodia.[9] In 1993, the two countries signed an agreement to maintain peace along their Himalayan borders.[10]

China had not shown any signs of direct belligerence toward India. Nor had Beijing come to the direct aid of its ally, Pakistan, in any of the wars that it fought with and always lost to India. China never threatened non-nuclear weapon India with the use of nuclear weapons. Instead, it unilaterally pledged no-first-use of its nuclear weapons against non-nuclear powers.

China's international profile is changing fast too. It is now an active member of the international trading system and has serious stakes in maintaining its relations with the West, especially the United States. China's alleged cooperation with Pakistan in terms of Pakistan's efforts to acquire nuclear weapon and missile capabilities had already generated controversy in Washington and the US sought to use its influence to dissuade China from its involvement in this regard. What then justified the heightened threat perception from China at that stage?

In the context of the history of Sino-Indian relations over the past decades, upgrading the Chinese threat appears grossly exaggerated. China first exploded her nuclear device in 1964. The relations between China and India have remained strained since the 1962 war. India's continued support to the Dalai Lama, contrasting perspectives of New Delhi and Beijing over issues such as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the Pakistan–China nuclear nexus have fueled distrust between them. India and China have also competed for influence in other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, they avoided direct confrontation. A formidable example of Chinese restraint, one that might even have raised questions in Pakistani minds about relations with China, was Beijing's hands-off approach in Indo-Pakistani conflicts, despite Islamabad's closeness to China. The latter never came to the rescue of Pakistan even when Pakistan was humiliated and divided because of the decisive Indian military victory in 1971. Some Indian experts though believe that only the Soviet backing of India prevented a direct military intervention by China.[11]

Recently, suspicions over Chinese intentions were raised with regard to attempts by the five nuclear powers to coerce India to join the CTBT. China became a party to the 'entry into force' (EIF) clause of the CTBT which calls for a review of this treaty after two years. At the time of the review, if India still refused to sign the treaty, the five nuclear powers could take appropriate 'measures', that could be sanctions. This led to the perception in some circles in India that the five nuclear powers sought to effectively close India's nuclear option. Swaran Singh, for example, saw attempts by the proponents of the CTBT, and not China,

emerging as a sudden threat that clearly forced India to cross the nuclear threshold. Official reliance on a Chinese threat to justify India's own policy reversal, according to Singh, was only 'incidental'.[12]

Well-known Indian commentator Achin Vanaik noted that the nature of the Chinese threat to India has always been 'abstract' and has been raised to justify India's pursuit of nuclear weapons. He argued that India's relationship with the former Soviet Union, now Russia, has been much more strategic than that of Pakistan with China. Chinese support to Pakistan does not match that of Russian support to India. Russia has supplied India with the most advanced fighter aircraft and is helping it set up two nuclear reactors.[13]

How is the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan likely to change the reality in the South Asian region? Despite past wars, India and Pakistan still have to agree on a permanent settlement of the disputed Kashmir region. Pakistan has challenged the annexation of this Muslim majority territory in India since Independence. The 1948 and 1965 wars were fought over this territory. Today, Indo-Pakistan borders in Kashmir are among the most heavily fortified in the world. Minor exchanges of fire between the forces of the two countries are not only regular but probably the only kind of entertainment that the fatigued forces of the two countries can afford in this remote region. Since the 1971 war, the line of control (LoC) that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan normally has worked effectively as their de facto border. 'Normal' low intensity conflict, however, escalated in May 1999 in the 'Kargil War' to dangerous levels before Pakistan forces were forced to withdraw in July. Under the Shimla Accord, Pakistan agreed not to seek to alter the line of control with force.[14] India's military reaction supported by the international community, including the US, appears to confirm the status of the LoC.

India and China, too, have lingering territorial claims against each other. The intensity of such claims does not compare well with that between India and Pakistan. Both China and India accuse each other of continued occupation of their territories but none of them have pressed their claim to the point of a military confrontation.

India's territorial disputes with Pakistan as well as China have thus been frozen for over quarter of a century. China being nuclear since 1964 and India not having such weapons did not change much. How will the acquisition of nuclear weapons now both by India and Pakistan change this situation? As Chinese commentators since the Indian nuclear explosions have pointed out, India labored hard to highlight the

Chinese threat to justify its nuclear ambitions. It emphasized issues that could have been left alone. No one can entertain an illusion that India and Pakistan, let alone India and China, can settle their still unresolved border claims by resorting to force. It is even more doubtful that India can alter the situation in its favor if such a conflict occurs with China. Even Prime Minister Vajpayee told parliament on August 4, 1998 that his government wanted to improve relations with China on other issues while putting 'sensitive' border questions into cold storage.[15] Raising the Chinese specter at this point thus hardly made much sense.

It is difficult to understand how L.K. Advani saw India acquiring the bomb making a substantial change in the situation between India and Pakistan in terms of the ongoing conflict in Kashmir. In the wake of the Indian nuclear explosion, he issued a strong warning to Pakistan to roll back its anti-India policy and to stop sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. He exhorted Pakistan to take note of the 'qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pak relations'.[16] India has long complained of Pakistani-assisted infiltration of terrorists in the Indian part of Kashmir. Whatever the truth of such claims, no one in their right mind would find the induction of nuclear weapons of any consequence in resolving the Kashmir problem, especially since Pakistan also proved its nuclear capability. It is even less conceivable how India's possession of a few nuclear weapons can change the military equilibrium with China.

China's growing economic might is as much, if not a greater, challenge to India as its military capabilities. India's pursuit of higher trade and investment is not likely to be promoted by nuclear bombs. Instead, it will somewhat be thwarted by sanctions. Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, director of India's leading strategic think tank and a member of the Defense Review Team constituted by the BJP government, had also argued just before the explosions against nuclear tests in view of the international repercussions and the prohibitive price tag resulting from sanctions.[17]

There have been some indications that the real motive behind India's nuclear explosions has been neither China nor Pakistan. Instead, the decision to declare nuclear status was aimed at gaining international recognition for India commensurate with its strength. One of India's leading strategic analysts, for example, held 'the wimpish behavior' of the Indian governments for uncertainty in India's nuclear and missile program.[18] Human rights activist Saumen Guha noted that most Indians were led to believe that the nuclear arsenal would help the nation achieve greatness and are ignorant about the scale of devastation that it involves.[19]

Did India then really need to explode bombs to back its demand for expansion of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and, of course, ensure a seat for itself? It has been argued that India perceived nuclear weapons as 'as entry ticket to great power status'. Krauthammer finds such perceptions out of tune with a time when efforts were underway to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and reduce existing arsenals.[20] Japan is very likely to be a new member if seats are added. Japan is not a nuclear power. Only the United States was a declared nuclear power when the UN Charter was agreed upon.

A permanent seat on the Security Council is also a measure of the international influence of an actor, determined by military as well as goodwill, and the support a country has among members of the international community. India has repeatedly lost its bids for high profile positions in the United Nations. Such failures obviously point to India's need to put greater efforts and resources in gaining international support. India needs to start such efforts in its very backyard with neighbors such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. These smaller South Asian countries find the Indian attitude toward their problems unbecoming of India's huge military and economic strength in the region. For India's smaller neighbors, the annexation of Sikkim in the early 1970s was an alarming example of India's expansionist drive. Many Nepalese resent the paternalistic clauses of the 1950 treaty between the two countries.

Beyond the region, India's lopsided diplomacy and its inability to look beyond its regional prism has done great damage. Its policy on Afghanistan, for example, was out of step with overwhelming international condemnation of the Soviet intervention. India was among the few countries that had a very ambiguous position on the question of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The acquisition of nuclear weapons is hardly likely to help India improve its muffled international standing. Instead, it now has another competitor—nuclear Pakistan. Pakistan's tit-for-tat tests unlikely to help Indian aspirations for recognition as a full-fledged nuclear power at par with the other five.[21] As one commentator pointed out, with Pakistan's nuclear explosion, India remains on par 'with lowly Pakistan'. India and Pakistan are two poor countries 'with delusions of grandeur, close to mutual incineration'.[22]

What all this boils down to is a classic disjuncture between how India views itself and how others view India: India's perception of not having achieved an international status commensurate with what it deserves may be real. However, India is unlikely to overcome this feeling of undue deprivation by forcing its way into the nuclear club.

The BJP's Domestic Calculations

Did the BJP then decide to go nuclear primarily to reap political advantages at home? If so, what did this decision entail for the BJP's and India's political future and for the prospects of peace and security in South Asia? Over the past decade, a sea change has occurred in the dynamics of Indian democracy. For the first time in India's history, a Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, won a vote of confidence in parliament and was leading the national government in coalition. The rise of the BJP has been phenomenal. In 1984, the BJP won only two seats in parliament. Its performance in the 1989, 1991, 1996, and 1998 elections were 86, 120, 161, and 174 respectively. For the second election in a row, the party emerged from India's national elections as the largest party in parliament.

Disillusionment among India's Hindu majority with what is described as the pseudo-secular policies of previous governments is mentioned as the leading factor behind the successful assertion of the Hindu majority campaign headed by the BJP and its sister organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).[23] According to the BJP, the Congress Party used secularism as a veil to appease minorities and ignore majority sentiments. Two key examples of such appeasement policies, often highlighted by the BJP, are a separate civil code for the Muslim community and special status for the disputed territory of Kashmir.

The BJP also projects India's Hindu majority as a 'threatened minority' surrounded by other religions and cultures in the region and beyond. It also portrays Pakistan's military links with China as designed to weaken and humiliate India. Hindu suspicions of the Muslim community grew worse with the influx of funds from the newly rich Arab countries to Muslim organizations in India and the greater visibility of these organizations. Hindus also resent the Muslim community's aversion to family planning measures and suspect it to be a design to outnumber Hindus. There is thus no dearth of facts and fiction for the BJP to rally the Hindu majority.

Nuclear Weapons: The BJP's Main Prize

Ever since China tested its nuclear device in 1964, the BJP, formerly the Jan Sangh, has supported the induction of nuclear weapons into India's

defense forces. N. Ram in a *Frontline* article put together the recent BJP stand on the nuclear issue as it appeared in its election manifestoes:

> to 'give our defenses nuclear teeth' (1991); to 're-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons' and 'expedite the serial production of Prithvi and make Agni I operational for the deployment of these missiles... [and] hasten the development of Agni II' (1996); 'to expedite the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons' and 'expedite the development of the Agni series of ballistic missiles with a view to increasing their range and accuracy' (1998).[24]

Thus, there is no denying the fact that the BJP has consistently supported India acquiring nuclear weapons. It was the only political party which categorically stated that it would 'exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons' rather than just keep the option open. This fact alone, however, does not explain why the BJP decided to undertake the move at that point of time. There are many other things that the BJP always stood for but was not able to do since it came to power in March 1998. It has consistently called for a Uniform Civil Code, the construction of the Ram Temple, and the deletion of Article 370 from the constitution. None of these issues, however, figured on the National Agenda that was agreed to as a governing covenant by the BJP and its coalition partners. The BJP, however, succeeded in placing the nuclear issue on the National Agenda. Besides proposing to set up a National Security Council to undertake India's first ever Strategic Defense Review, the agenda stated: 'To ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India we will take all necessary steps and exercise all available options. Towards that end we will re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons'.[25]

BJP's conciliatory posture on other controversial issues deluded many analysts, including perhaps US government officials, into believing that its stance on the nuclear issue was no different from others, and to the expectation that the BJP would continue the policy of nuclear ambivalence followed by earlier governments. As Dua pointed out, India in a way misled the world by simply telling the truth since the US and its friends believed that the BJP would dare not tread the nuclear track.[26]

What then made the BJP deviate from this pattern of double talk? The reasons lie both in the BJP's political compulsions as the leader of a

flimsy coalition and in its sensing of a muted international reaction to the nuclear tests. Ever since coming into power as the head of 13-plus parties and groups, the BJP leadership had been hamstrung by several controversies and feuds among its unruly coalition partners. In its bid to come to power, nothing suffered more than the clean image that the BJP sought to project for itself, as distinct from the allegedly corrupt practices of other parties.

The party's success in forging pre- and post-election alliances with regional parties such as the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu and the TDP from Andhra Pradesh was accompanied by horse-trading and shady deals. Both the AIADMK and the TDP kept the BJP leadership guessing until the last minute by withholding their support to the coalition. The compromises that the BJP had to make in the process also lowered morale in the party, as is obvious from this lament of a BJP leader: 'Although we are the largest party in the ruling coalition at the center, we also seem to be the weakest. Consider after all the pressures that have been put on us by smaller parties and compromises we have made on one issue after another'.[27]

The BJP was also rattled by rancor within its leadership ranks. The party General Secretary, Govindacharya, raised a hornet's nest in the Hindutva camp with his reported remark that the party's prime ministerial candidate, A.B. Vajpayee, was a 'mask'. He also described the BJP's pre-electoral alliances with parties like the AIADMK as 'an aberration'.[28]

The disparate parties and groups on whom the BJP relied for support did not exhibit an image of stability either. Most of its allies emphasized their differences with the BJP, rather than similarities. Keeping intact its hard core Hindutva constituency became a growing challenge for the party amidst all the compromises it made.[29] The BJP in its bid to end its untouchability adopted a 'totally non-political approach' toward the turncoats, turning its attitude 'more like a club rather than a political party'.[30]

The National Agenda of Governance exhibited the coalition's trouble from the very outset. For example, at the unveiling ceremony, Mamata Banerjee and Ramakrishna Hegde, two of the 13 in the coalition, refused to stand up along with others holding a copy of the National Agenda to pose for cameras. The agenda contained only filtered and muted issues to suit all the members of the coalition. It excluded all controversial issues, such as the building of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya, deletion of Article 370 of the constitution, and the enactment of a Uniform Civil Code. This led a United Front spokesman to wonder

why the BJP and it pre-poll allies had not released the National Agenda before the elections. He also asked how the BJP could switch between a hardline Hindutva agenda in its election manifestoes and then shunt the same agenda to the backburner after the elections just to gain power.[31]

Within weeks of formation of Vajpayee's Cabinet, two members of the Cabinet had to leave under corruption charges to face trial. In addition, several of the regional allies of the BJP demanded special economic packages for their regions. The Samata Party from Bihar, along with the Trinamul Congress from West Bengal and the Biju Janata Dal from Orissa, formed an 'eastern alliance' to press the government to distribute resources in an equitable manner between the regions. The AIADMK and the Samata Party also demanded the dismissal of the provincial governments in Tamil Nadu and Bihar. Subsequently, the BJP's reluctance to dismiss the Tamil Nadu government became a constant irritant in its relations with AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha. Orissa threatened that it would end its partnership if the government did not implement a special package for Orissa within a year.

Uneasy surprises and compulsions thus accompanied the BJP's ascendance to power. The entry of Sonia Gandhi in the campaign had taken the party's leadership by surprise and dashed its hope of obtaining a majority on its own. The party had groped in the dark for ways to deal effectively with the Sonia phenomenon. Its effort to shape the campaign in terms of the 'Ram versus Rome' slogan failed to sway public support in its favor. Sonia neutralized this BJP plank by using BJP's favorite Hindu ethos, portraying her status as the 'bahu' (daughter-in-law) who had made India her home for 30 years.[32] Sonia even surprised the BJP by challenging the government to make public all details about the Bofors gun deal. Bofors represents a Rs 64 crore alleged kickback in the 1986 Rs 1500 crore gun deal with the Swedish arms manufacturer.[33]

The formation of the BJP coalition was not likely to make the Bofors any more easily manageable for the BJP. Some top leaders of the BJP were reported to have a personal closeness to the Hinduja family. The Hinduja brothers have been linked to the Bofors payments. Some sections of the BJP thus viewed action against Sonia and others in this case as potentially counterproductive.[34] Moreover, in view of the BJP's embracing of Jayalalitha, the BJP's projected image as an anti-corruption party got blemished. The party appeared to be dodging corruption and criminality in favor of newfound allies and power.[35]

The futility of focusing its campaign on Sonia and her family was most evident in Maharashtra. Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackrey's tirade

against Sonia Gandhi may have harmed rather than helped his campaign. The BJP in its alliance with the Shiv Sena could win only 10 of the 48 parliamentary seats in Maharashtra. In 1996, they had won 33 seats. The BJP also lost considerable ground in Rajasthan, where the party could only win five seats as against 13 won in 1996.

The BJP's coalition compulsions also marred the process of Cabinet formation. Too many aspirants were vying for few key portfolios. First reports of differences arose over the allocation of finance to Jaswant Sinha. Sinha was not reported to be a favorite of the prime minister for the job. This was followed by reports that Ramakrishna Hegde wanted foreign affairs but had to be content with the relatively lower profile commerce ministry.

The worst irritant was AIADMK leader Jayalalitha. The AIADMK and its Tamil Nadu allies together had 28 seats in parliament. Her tough bargaining won Tamil Nadu seven seats in the council of ministers, four Cabinet ranks, and one minister of state with independent charge. The BJP also had to placate Jayalalitha by conceding her demands for the finance and law portfolios. These two departments play a crucial role in the investigation of several cases of political corruption faced by Jayalalitha. Her nominee, R. K. Kumar, minister of state for finance, was assigned charge of the crucial Department of Revenue, as also of the Banking Division. Another key confidant, R. Janarthanan, was given charge of the Department of Personnel and Public Grievances, which exercises administrative control over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).[36]

As indicated earlier, the BJP and Jayalalitha were constantly involved in a tussle over her demand for the dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu. Many BJP leaders saw behind this demand Jayalalitha's design to throw out the corruption cases filed against her by the DMK government and central agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate and the income tax department. The BJP-led government reportedly replaced 33 standing counsels for various central government agencies in Tamil Nadu with sympathizers of the AIADMK. It is these counsels who represent the cases of the Enforcement Directorate and the income tax department against Jayalalitha and her close associates.[37]

Is it right then to conclude that the primary considerations for the BJP's decision to go for the 'big bang' were rooted in its analysis of political costs versus benefits in the domestic context? All the circumstantial evidence points strongly in this direction. Unable to take a harsh public posturing on Ayodhya in view of the BJP's coalitional com-

pulsions, the BJP adopted a stridently nationalistic stand on the nuclear issue. The appeal of national security is equally emotive but more diffused compared to communal issues. The prime minister's political advisor described the tests as 'not nuclear tests but the test of nationalism'. In the emotive appeal of this issue in the name of patriotism, the BJP saw great potential political advantage.[38]

The BJP's grip over power was indeed very shaky and its tenure highly uncertain. The coalition quickly earned a reputation for indecisiveness and inaction. The BJP leadership was thus in no position to lose time in asserting its national leadership position. How else can one rationalize the impatience of the government to not even wait for the report of the task force on defense review that it had formed and whose reports were due in July? Even the defense minister had categorically stated that nuclear weapons would not be inducted before the report was submitted.

BJP *and the Irresistible Spell of* Nuclear Weapons

The nuclear issue came as a 'god send' for the BJP. As has been widely reported, all of the BJP's recent predecessors had unsuccessfully tried to test nuclear weapons. The Congress government led by Narsimha Rao was prepared for the test in 1995 when US intelligence agencies got the hint and Rao yielded to international pressure. Again, the BJP's 13-day government in 1996 is said to have given the go ahead for the explosions but its directive could not be carried out only because it lost power. RSS General Secretary Sudarshan has confirmed this.[39] Even the United Front government that succeeded Vajpayee's beleaguered Cabinet considered doing so, but shied away in view of both international pressure as well as possible internal differences within the ranks of the United Front itself, especially the Left parties.

No one can blame the BJP alone for the move. Even the military and the scientific community were exerting their influence on the government to allow them to demonstrate India's capability before the ratification of the CTBT formalized the monopoly of existing nuclear states over the weapons. Amrita Abraham argued that in the weak BJP government with a long-standing commitment to acquire nuclear weapons, the 'bomb lobby' (consisting of some nuclear scientists, retired bureaucrats, and foreign and strategic policy analysts in New Delhi) saw the political compulsions that would enable it to achieve its dreams.[40]

Disquiet among the 'bomb lobby' over the lack of progress had been persistent. Only a few years ago, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India's leading nuclear scientist, had become so frustrated with the refusal of successive governments to allow nuclear tests that he was about to quit his position as the government's top scientific advisor and become vice chancellor of Madras University.[41]

With little obvious risks to the party, the BJP stood to gain enormously from the decision. It fulfilled the BJP's long-standing commitment on national defense and certainly strengthened its stand at least among its core supporters. None of the BJP's other major commitments could have been accomplished so easily. All that the BJP needed to do here was to give a go ahead and then reap the benefits. Moreover, in the wake of the tests, the party also portrayed itself as capable of defying international pressure for the sake of national security. The BJP could have done nothing else that required so little effort and yet gave it so much limelight at home as well as abroad.

The BJP thus appears to have made a premeditated attempt to capture the nuclear issue. In its election manifesto for 1998, it underlined its determination to review the question of inducting nuclear weapons. It also stood firm on the question of the nuclear issue while negotiating the National Agenda with its pre- and post-poll partners. The eyes of the BJP were fixated on the big prize—crossing the nuclear threshold. In this dogged pursuit, it allowed no distraction, be it the changed international context that was more conducive than ever for the pursuit of India's professed nuclear disarmament objectives, or, of course, targeting scarce resources at poverty alleviation and other urgent needs. It is also reported that with the possible exception of the defense minister, neither any of the BJP's coalition partners nor opposition groups were allowed to have any say in the decision.[42] Some reports suggested that even the defense minister was kept in the dark about the tests. In an interview to *Frontline* in early April, Defense Minister George Fernandes had stated quite categorically that the question of the nuclear option would only be taken up after the National Security Council had been constituted and a comprehensive strategic defense review completed.[43]

The BJP's nuclear politics thus came as a second coup directed against both the international community and its opponents at home. Its first coup, of course, was the demolition of the Babri mosque in December 1992 that had led to the worst communal riots in India since the violence that accompanied the separation of the country in 1947.[44] The pattern common to both the coups reveals a mindless pursuit of

power, showing little or no respect for India's laws and institutions. The demolition of the mosque occurred in complete violation of India's laws and the apex court orders. The BJP seemed to ignore the categorical assurances against demolition that its leadership had given to the national government led by Narasimha Rao.

The BJP thus used frenzied nationalism and a strategy of brinkmanship as its primary political tools, and did so quite successfully. Reasons for this are not hard to find. The BJP not only survived domestic sanctions following the demolition of the Babri mosque but also tremendously improved its national political stock. Playing the 'Hindutva' card helped it solidify its vote bank and improve its standing in national as well as regional elections.

In 1996, the BJP emerged as the largest political party in parliament and held a brief stint in government for 13 days. Its ouster from power resulted from its failure to enlist any post-election allies to its side to improve its tally of 194 seats, mainly because of its image as a 'communalist Hindutva party'. The BJP failed to add even a single seat after it formed the government. The United Front that succeeded it was formed with the single objective of keeping the saffron party out of power and maintaining India's secular tradition. Even the Congress supported the United Front from outside against the BJP.

The BJP stood in much better shape after the 1998 election. In this election, the BJP retained and slightly improved its status as the largest party in parliament. Even more importantly, the party effectively ended what its leaders used to describe as its 'majestic isolation' by making pre-election as well as post-election allies with influential regional parties. BJP's new allies transformed its largely regional image. The BJP entered into a pre-election alliance with an influential leader of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha, who heads the AIADMK. This allowed the party to win three parliamentary seats in the state for the first time. In Karnataka, it entered into an alliance with Ramakrishna Hegde, who heads a breakaway faction of the Janata Dal in the state known as the Lok Shakti. By winning 13 of the 28 seats, the BJP also improved its tally in Karnataka over its six seats in 1996. Even in West Bengal, the bastion of Marxist forces, the BJP entered into electoral arrangements with Mamata Banerjee, who walked out of the Congress Party on the eve of elections and formed the Trinamul Congress. The BJP won its first ever seat in West Bengal too.[45] In addition, the BJP continued to remain allied with the Akali Dal from Punjab and the Samata Party, hailing mainly from Bihar. In the post-election phase, the BJP's grand success was an

alliance with the United Front convener, Chandrababu Naidu, whose support enabled the BJP government to win the vote of confidence with ease. Until the 1998 election, the BJP had remained largely a 'cow belt' party with its influence limited mainly to the Hindu speaking areas of north and central India.

The distinction between the communal and secular forces was further blunted by the willingness of regional parties, especially ones like the Telugu Desam, to align with the BJP. The BJP now rivaled the Congress as another major national alternative offering the ever more influential regional parties more choice and greater flexibility. The 1998 election also showed the hollowness of the secular front and the complexity of tactical voting. Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, for example, called on voters to resort to tactical voting to defeat the BJP. Disarray in the so-called secular camp and division of secular votes made such an exercise very difficult. The contests in many constituencies were triangular, characterized by intense rivalry for non-BJP votes. The Congress, which had shown solidarity with the secular front, had pulled down the United Front government. Despite Sonia Gandhi's apologies, the Congress could not overcome its image as a party willing to use the communal card to improve its electoral performance.[46] The parties in the United Front, on the other hand, entered the polls with terminal divisions on questions of seat adjustment as well as possible power sharing alliances, making a leading commentator brand it as 'neither united nor a front'.[47]

While the BJP calculated immense gains at home from the explosion, it must have found little indication of resolute international action in terms of sanctions. Moreover, whatever sanctions were imposed were used by the BJP as capital to highlight its stand that India must be built by Indians and advance its swadeshi (self-reliance) agenda to the extent that it served the party's interest. A weak sanction regime was claimed by the party as its successful assertion in the international community. The BJP thus benefited either way.

The Aftermath of the Explosion

Was the fall out of the nuclear explosion likely to consolidate and expand the BJP's support base, eventually turning it into another Congress Party likely to dominate India's political landscape? Or was the BJP's gain likely to be temporary and would the intense competition

between contending political forces prevail and neutralize the BJP's political advantages resulting from the nuclear front and thus keep it from realizing its crusader agenda? Supposing that the BJP succeeded in consolidating its grip in Indian politics, would it make its international stance more conciliatory toward its neighbors, especially China and Pakistan, and thus help avoid a confrontation in the region, conventional or nuclear? Alternatively, would it seek to transform its increased political influence into yet another adventure with an eye on galvanizing the nation behind it under the pretext of national security?

The first scenario entailed serious risks for both India's national and international situations. It could have released the spirit of atavistic forces and be interpreted as a divine blessing to complete fanatic projects such as building the Ram Temple at controversial places, launching of the crusade for the liberation of more religious sites from existing mosques such as those in Kashi and Mathura, and greater assimilation of Kashmir in the Indian mainstream. It could also have boosted the BJP's desire to alter the parliamentary model of the Indian constitution into the party's preferred model of a presidential system.[48]

Such a scenario could also have marginalized, if not swept, the moderate leadership, such as Vajpayee's, from the party and resulted in greater control by extreme elements such as Govindacharya and Uma Bharati. Vajpayee's leadership has come under fire from extreme elements in the party and his image is being used as a cloak to advance the party's agenda.

How likely was such a scenario though? In the volatile political milieu of Indian politics, nothing can be ruled out. The BJP stood to gain from several prevailing trends in Indian politics while others continue to check its advance. Public disillusionment with politicians in general and their desire to try something new benefited the BJP. As an *India Today*–MARG poll in 1991 indicated, Ram was an important factor behind the saffron surge. However, the poor performance of other parties was the major reason causing a large swing to the BJP. More than half of those voting for the BJP were doing so only to give the new party a chance.[49]

A nationwide *India Today*–MARG opinion poll in June 1996 showed that the alliance of the UF and the Congress Party to support the UF government did not win public support. It indicated a favorable swing of 4 percent in favor of the BJP and raised the party's hope that it would be able to gain the sympathy of the electorate against the unholy alliance of non-BJP parties.[50] It did reap the benefits in the 1998 election by

presenting itself as the only party deserving a chance to rule. Any attempt by the discordant non-BJP parties to unite with the single objective of displacing the BJP was unlikely to be any more popular. The communal versus secular dichotomy completely lost its relevance in view of the numerous splits and cleavages among the constituents of so-called secular forces.

Second, the Ayodhya issue is still very much in the news and still commands an emotive response from many Hindus. While the BJP has underplayed the issue, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has intensified its preparation for the construction of the temple at the controversial site. The VHP has vowed to build a temple on the site of the disputed mosque regardless of any court order or government orders.[51] Unless the VHP wanted to embarrass the BJP governments at the center as well in the state, the construction of the temple would probably not be undertaken while the BJP was in power. Once out of power, construction may be undertaken to galvanize support against non-BJP forces.

Third, Pokhran II would help the party at least retain its core supporters and gain greater confidence of the armed forces and strategic community. The muted international reaction to the explosion eased pressure on the BJP government. Moreover, passage of the provision by the US Congress authorizing the president to lift sanctions on agricultural and humanitarian supplies helped the BJP highlight its success.

Favorable score on these points notwithstanding, several other trends in India's domestic politics continued to dictate a moderating course in the party's agenda and worked as a bulwark against the threat to India's pluralistic political system and its tradition of tolerance for minorities. The first, of course, is India's fiercely active democratic political process. At no other time in India's history has the force of cross-cutting cleavages been greater. Ever since the 1989 election, uncertainty of electoral outcomes has become the hallmark of Indian politics. Four parliamentary elections in a row (1989, 1991, 1996, and 1998) have resulted in hung parliaments, sending the parties scrambling for coalitional support to put together a government. The scenarios in 1996 and 1998 were different from the two earlier elections. In 1989, the prepoll alliance of the National Front (NF), Left Front (LF), and the BJP added up to a majority of 282, giving them sole claim to form the government. In the wake of the 1991 election, the Congress and its allies had 241 seats, leaving them narrowly short of a majority. This led

to the formation of the first ever minority government at the center led by the Congress.

In both the 1996 and 1998 national elections, the trend toward diffusion of power was unmistakable. The BJP and Congress were the only two parties that emerged with over 100 seats each. Therefore, majority of the seats were being held by smaller national and ever more influential regional parties. Parties other than the BJP and the Congress had a critical role in the making and breaking of national governments in India. With the signs of reinvigoration of the Congress Party under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the shift away from a dominant party syndrome is likely to prevail.

As the BJP leadership has learned and is continually emphasizing, the key to power in Delhi lies in forging alliances, and this is unlikely to change in the near future in view of the ever expanding influence of regional parties. Underlying the growth of regional-and caste-based parties and the subsequent plummeting of support for national parties, there appears to be a deeper and healthier shift in the attitude of Indian voters. Both the 1996 and 1998 elections were marked by an absence of both overarching national issues and national leaders. The nuclear issue is unlikely to fill this vacuum.

Nothing is more unpredictable in Indian politics today than the nature of alliances between political groups and parties. No one thought on the eve of the 1998 election that the TDP leader and United Front Convener, Chandrababu Naidu, would align with the BJP to form a government at the center. It was also inconceivable that the constituents of the United Front, whose government was forced out of power by the withdrawal of the Congress support, would maneuver again to form an alliance with the Congress to seek power in New Delhi. The BJP's debut from the isolation it confronted following the 1996 election was also a phenomenal development. Political parties in India these days act like stockbrokers, whose only considerations in associating or dissociating with others are the political benefits they derive from such moves.

A sweeping victory for the BJP is also against the interest of regional parties. A dominant party at the center is the worst outcome for regional parties. The central government in India has constitutional powers to dissolve a state government under certain situations. The hegemonic Congress Party in the past has wreaked havoc among non-Congress provincial governments by the arbitrary use of this constitutional power to intimidate and dissolve such governments. Many of these regional parties, including the allies of the BJP, have been campaigning for the

deletion of this constitutional provision. Even the BJP experienced the wrath of this provision in October 1997, when the governor of the state dissolved its government in Uttar Pradesh. Prospects of the BJP's emergence as a dominant party may lead to reconsideration on the part of BJP allies to form anti-BJP formations with the Congress or other parties.

The chances of the BJP making any substantial gains from the nuclear explosion were uncertain at best. The public reaction in India to the explosion and the decision to induct nuclear weapon into India's military arsenal was overwhelmingly favorable. There was, however, a limit to the political capital that the BJP could derive out of this situation. Any attempt by the BJP to claim credit for the nuclear achievement was hotly contested by other parties, most of whom had already characterized the issue as non-partisan. The longer term consolidation of the BJP's grip on power depended more on tackling the economic hardships faced by the common people. Economic indicators spelled harder times. Soaring prices caused havoc even among the middle class voters. Investors' confidence in India's economy had been descending and the national currency nose-dived repeatedly.[52]

Moreover, the cost of even limited sanctions was likely to be substantial and politically risky. According to US officials, sanctions could have cost India about $20 billion in terms of loans and credits it might have been eligible for. For example, the loss of credit from the US export-import bank to the tune of around $4 billion reduced trade between the two countries. US opposition could also have prevented loans to India by international financial institutions.[53] All this came at a critical time for the Indian economy. According to recent status reports, India is among the world's eighth most indebted country after Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, China, the Russian Federation, Argentina, and Thailand. India's external debt was put at $92.88 billion.[54] Resulting huge debt servicing payments combined with the fall in exports had serious implications.[55] As pointed out earlier, the weakness of the Indian rupee was only a prelude to a worse scenario.

The estimates of developing delivery systems for nuclear bombs, nuclear submarines, and supercomputers to enable it to upgrade the quality of its nuclear weapons without further explosions are enormous. Conservative figures range from Rs 15,000 to 20,000 crore, half the annual defense budget spread over a number of years. This is likely to cause an increase by an average of 15 percent annually in defense expenditures. These estimates do not include the cost of manufacturing the

bombs themselves.[56] As Pani pointed out, India with a third of its population living below the poverty line could have saved its scarce resources by forgoing the nuclearization option for more developed nuclear umbrellas, possibly from the United States, as done by Germany and Japan.[57]

Ultimately, restraints on the BJP's fundamentalist agenda in India will be determined more by the continued resilience and robustness of political pluralism in India than international reactions to its policies. The frivolity of the US sanctions was evident from the displeasure of US policy-makers with mandatory sanctions under US law. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan has confronted US policy-makers with their worst dilemma. On July 9, 1998, the US Senate authorized the president to exempt loan guarantees extended by the US Agriculture Department for food and other agricultural commodities from India–Pakistan sanctions. It, however, left in place the harshest economic penalties. Moves were also afoot to allow the President more discretion over other areas of sanctions.[58]

Mixed signals emanated from New Delhi over its nuclear stand. India negotiated with the five nuclear powers (P-5) and G-8 countries for the lifting of economic sanctions that were imposed against it. The US and other allies were steadfast in their demand that India and Pakistan forsake weaponization and deployment of their nuclear weapons and sign the CTBT and, even the NPT, in exchange for ending their isolation. As an intended consequence of the nuclear question, at least from the point of view of India, the Kashmir issue gained much international limelight with pressure being exerted on India to find a solution to the imbroglio. This led commentators to wonder if the BJP policies may compel India to trade 'all the time-tested principles of Indian foreign policy'.[59]

Vajpayee indicated that India might sign the CTBT, as it would be the formalization of the moratorium it had already declared on any further nuclear tests. Vajpayee announced that India's nuclear restraint was built around the ideas of 'minimum deterrence' and 'no-first-use' of nuclear weapons. This unilateral undertaking was a reversal of India's earlier willingness to negotiate nuclear no-first-use arrangements with other powers in bilateral or multilateral fora. Vajpayee described 'preventing blackmail from other nuclear powers' as the main objective of nuclear deterrence. The prime minister also underplayed the Chinese threat by describing that threat as merely 'certain apprehensions'.[60]

If this is the real statement of intention, India and Pakistan may forsake the deployment of nuclear weapons against each other and relieve themselves of the burden of arms rivalry. India's pronouncement that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons is also a positive sign in terms of building confidence in the region. China already has such a commitment. One of the caveats involved in India's position is that it will sign the CTBT only as a member of the nuclear club. Will the five nuclear powers recognize India's, and logically Pakistan's, claim and open the door of the nuclear club for them? Russia is reported to have expressed its willingness to recognize India as a nuclear weapon state if India joined the CTBT and NPT, and a proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).[61]

However, the bomb lobby in both countries along with opportunistic political actors have tried to sabotage any moves toward signing the CTBT in the name of national interests and have complicated the decision-making. Politically, such a move was tempting since it raised domestic opposition against the ruling parties and kept international pressure on the governments. Sonia Gandhi warned the government against any hasty move in adhering to the CTBT. In Pakistan, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto vacillated in her stand on the nuclear question in a bid to gain political mileage. Before Pakistan tested its own weapons, she threw bangles in the air in the name of Prime Minister Sharif, which symbolizes lack of guts. In the aftermath, she reportedly lamented that Pakistan now was faced with grave insecurities.

Domestic political compulsions thus continue to shape the nuclear choices of the leaderships of both countries. As long as the stance on the nuclear question remains subject mainly to the imperatives of domestic political dynamics, the regional security environment will continue to exhibit the instability and insecurity of the domestic political arena in India as well as in Pakistan.

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About the Editors and Contributors

Editors

Ramashray Roy is a founder–member and former director (1976–1982) of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. Retired in 1992, he is currently a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. During a long and distinguished career, Dr Roy has taught at several prestigious universities including University of Texas, Austin, University of California, Los Angeles and Berkley, and the University of Missouri, Columbia. He has also been a recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and the Ford Foundation Fellowship, a National Professor of the University Grants Commission and a National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Dr Roy's areas of expertise include political parties, bureaucracy, electoral behavior, Indian politics, development, Gandhian thought, and political philosophy. With more than 20 books to his credit, he has recently published *Beyond Ego's Domain: Being and Order in the Veda.*

Paul Wallace is Professor of Political Science at University of Missouri, Columbia. Dr Wallace has received five Smithsonian-funded awards for national election studies in India. He has been a consultant on South Asia to members of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Attorney General's Office, defense lawyers, and other government agencies in North America. Professor Wallace has previously edited many books, including *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* and *Region and Nation in India*, apart from having published numerous articles and chapters on South Asia.

The Contributors

Sikata Banerjee currently teaches politics at the University of Lethbridge in Canada, after having received her doctoral degree from the University of Washington. Her research interests include nationalism, feminist theory, and women in politics. Dr Banerjee has published articles in leading journals and is the author of *Warriors in Politics: Hindu Nationalism, Violence, and the Shiv Sena in India* (forthcoming, Westview Press).

Kanchan Chandra is currently a doctoral candidate in Government at Harvard University. She has been an SSRC-Macarthur Foundation Fellow in International Peace and Security from 1996–1998. Her research interests include ethnic politics, political parties and electoral systems, democracy and democratization, and South Asian politics.

Pradeep Chhibber is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has written several articles on the Indian party system and electoral politics in India.

Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay is Associate Professor of Comparative Public Policy and South Asian Politics at Concordia University, Quebec, Canada. Her areas of research interest include identity-based politics and secessionist movements, popular culture, and public administration. She has published extensively on Kashmir, Indian cinema, and public policy.

Harold A. Gould is Visiting Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has published numerous scholarly and newspaper articles on India and is the author of six books, including *Grass-roots Politics and India: A Century of Political Evolution in Faizabad District* and *The Hope and the Reality: US–Indian Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan* (co-editor).

Pramod Kumar Kantha is currently a doctoral candidate in Political Science at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He was previously Lecturer at the Research Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal, and has published a number of articles and book chapters.

Pramod Kumar is currently Director, Institute for Development and Communication (IDC), Chandigarh. He has been a recipient of the

Homi Bhabha Fellowship in 1988. Dr Kumar has previously edited *Polluting Sacred Faith: Towards Understanding Communalism.*

Irfan Nooruddin is currently enroled as a doctoral candidate in Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, after having received his undergraduate degree in International Studies and Economics from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1996.

Binoy Shanker Prasad is currently engaged in post-doctoral research at the University of Toronto, Toronto. Dr Prasad has lectured on political science, international relations, and American government and politics at Delhi University, Mithila University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Washington DC, and University of Missouri, Columbia. His areas of research interest include American politics, race, ethnicity, political violence, and political development.

Arthur G. Rubinoff is currently Professor of Political Science and South Asian Studies at the University of Toronto, where he has taught since 1972. He also serves as Associate Director of the University of Toronto–York University Center on Asia Pacific Studies. Professor Rubinoff has received grants for his research from the Canada Council, the Ford Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Dr Rubinoff has more than two dozen articles to his credit in many prestigious journals and is the author of six books, including *The Construction of a Political Community: Integration and Identity in Goa* (also published by Sage).

Karli Srinivasulu is Associate Professor of Political Science at Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, and a Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. He has also been Visiting Fellow at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University. Dr Srinivasulu's research interests include political theory, state and agrarian movements, and state politics.

Virginia Van Dyke is a graduate of the University of Washington. She has previously published articles in *Economic and Political Weekly* and is the author of a number of book chapters.

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After a period of relative stability spanning the first three decades after independence, Indian politics has undergone a sea change from the beginning of the 1980s. This period has witnessed the emergence of regional parties at the national level, the fracturing of the electorate, and the emergence of coalition politics. As a consequence, India's political scenario has become highly complex which is perhaps best exemplified by the 12th Lok Sabha (constituted in 1998), the shortest in the country's history.

This is the first book to critically analyze the 1998 General Election in terms of changes in the party system and in the bases of social support. Comprising dynamic analyses of new and emerging trends in Indian politics, this volume:

- Provides data on the 1998 election combined with a rich comparison with past elections right from 1957. The emergence of two-party competition and the fragmentation of the party system—both at the national and state levels—are discussed.
- Emphasizes the importance of regionalism in Indian politics. Eleven state-focused chapters, which include material on assembly elections, constitute the core of this volume. They reveal that national politics are increasingly reflective of state politics.
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This timely volume is being published on the eve of the 13th General Election slated for September 1999. With its analysis of the key components of Indian politics, it will assist an informed understanding of the current political scenario, and of the 1999 election which is expected to take the world's largest democracy into the 21st century.

With its rich and comparative analysis of the major political strands that have emerged in recent elections, this volume will be of considerable interest to those in the fields of political science, psephology, election studies and sociology.

Ramashray Roy is a founder member and former director (1976–1982) of the Centre of the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi.

Paul Wallace is Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Contributors: Sikata Banerjee ♦ Kanchan Chandra ♦ Pradeep Chhibber ♦ Reeta Chowdhari-Tremblay ♦ Harold A. Gould ♦ Pramod K. Kantha ♦ Pramod Kumar ♦ Irfan Nooruddin ♦ Binoy Shanker Prasad ♦ Arthur G. Rubinoff ♦ Karli Srinivasulu ♦ Virginia Van Dyke

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Jacket design by Bharati Mirchandani

Rs 450

ISBN 0-7169-9388-6

Sage Publications